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cover
Kevin Coates
Snakes to Apples (cup), 2002
nephryte jade, silver, parcel-gilt, part patinated, coral, amber
height 6 1/2"
Photo: Clarissa Bruce

Kevin Coates

"The 'Mozart' Jewels"

"The Moor's Ear." Pectoral Brooch. Height: 67mm. Photo: Clarissa Bruce

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

This issue's cover story on "objects de vertu" practically begs the question: What makes an object virtuous or good? In historical terms, an object of virtue is one that is fashioned from precious materials and displays exceptional skill or virtuosity. Within a contemporary context the definition is less clear, and even among works of great opulence and technical finesse other criteria shape the assessment. According to author Andrea di Noto, the real virtue of such objects today lies not in amazing skill or rare materials but in the vision and passion invested within. The artists featured in her article—Daniel Brush, Kevin Coates, David Freda, and Kent Raible—each endow their work with priceless qualities of intellect and spirit. Indeed, value can never be based on material alone, although within the market for jewelry and metal worth still tends to be figured this way. Most consumers continue to be guilty of Oscar Wilde's claim that "they know the price of everything and the value of nothing."

Fortunately, the studio jewelry field abounds in prime examples that prove worth is not tied to monetary cost. Our "Forum" department offers a range of opinions on this very question, with five of the smartest contemporary jewelers addressing the issue: "How do you decide what value jewelry has for you personally?" Their answers range far and wide, expanding the notion of jewelry's value to include such factors as manifesting imagination, having a "higher calling," displaying originality and risk, providing "portable wonder," and allowing for an intimate exploration of the body's meaning. Added to the mix are articles on the protean career of David Smith, who redefined sculptural values in each of his series, and on Betty Tompkins' jewelry, which derives its worth from her intense personal investment. Together the views and examples presented here provide new equations to recalculate our appreciation of a virtuous object.

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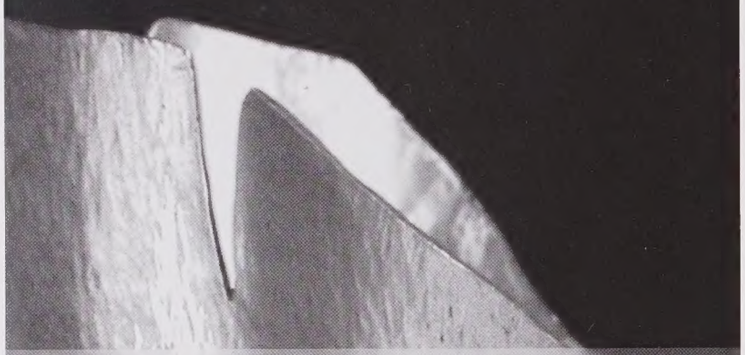

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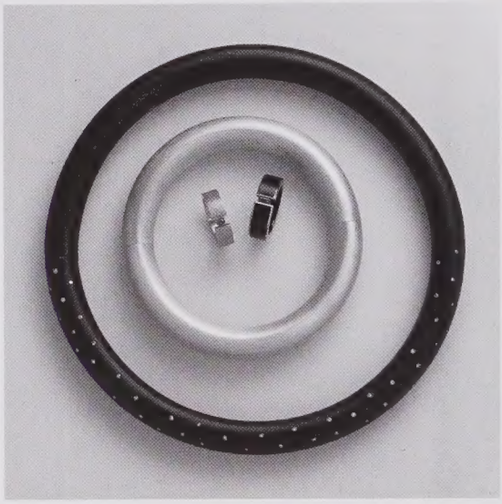

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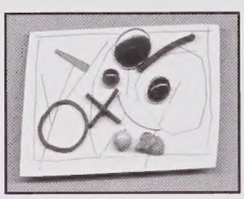

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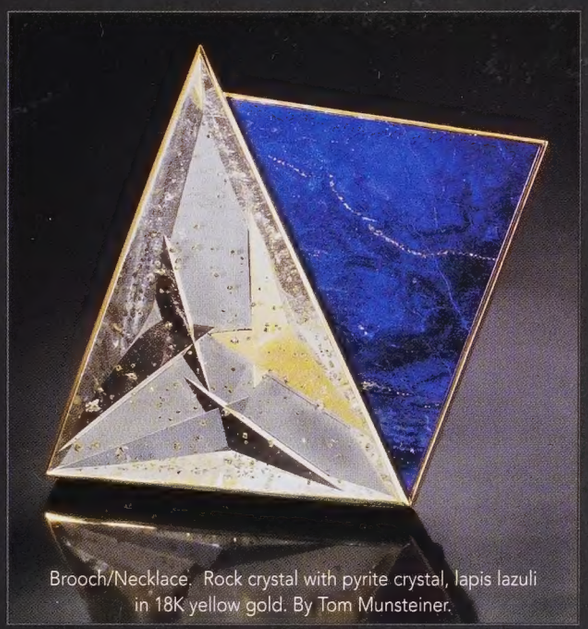

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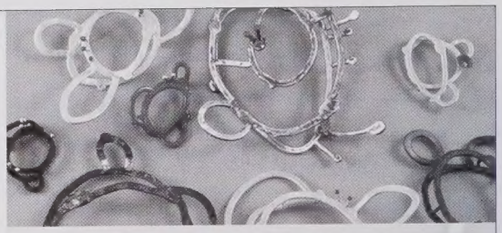

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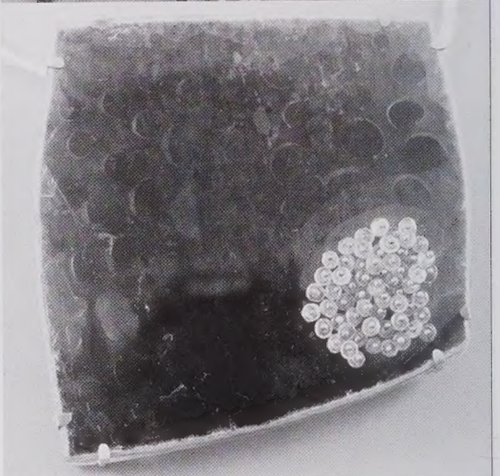

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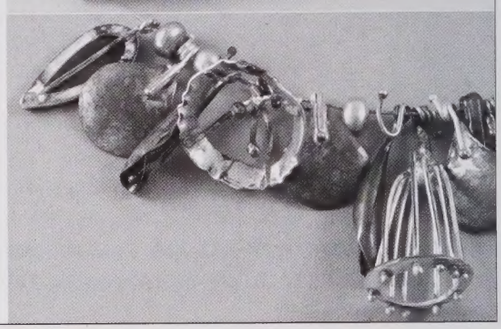

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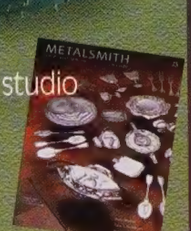

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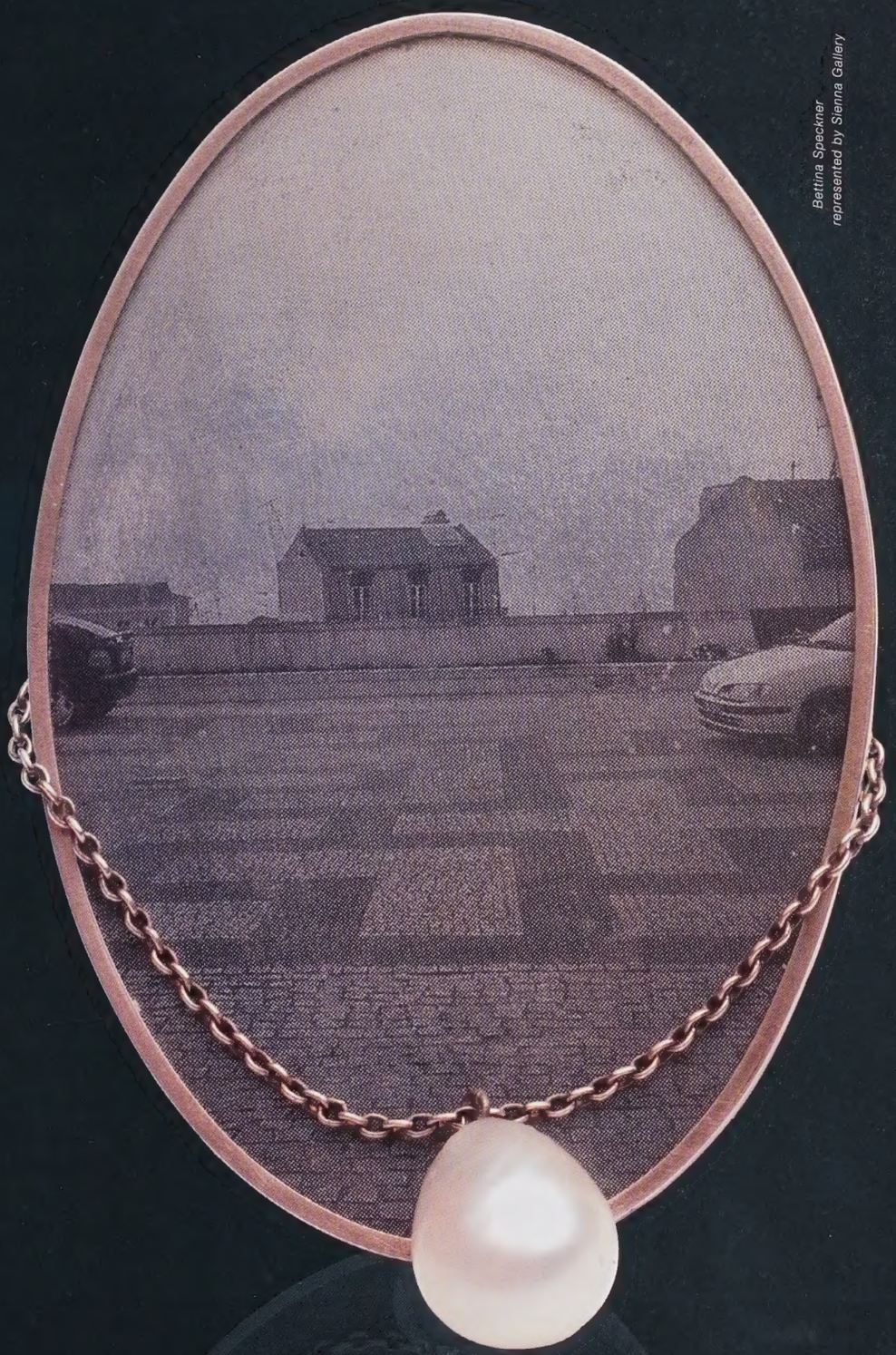

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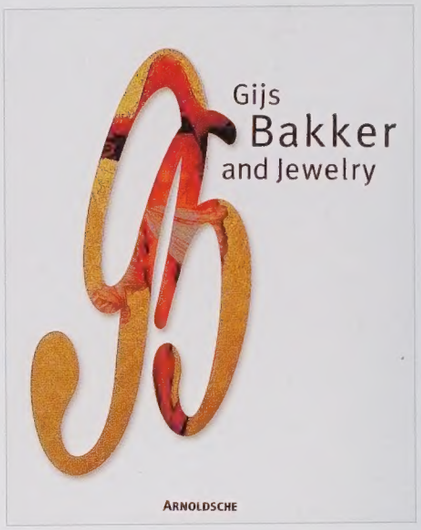


Gijs Bakker and Jewelry

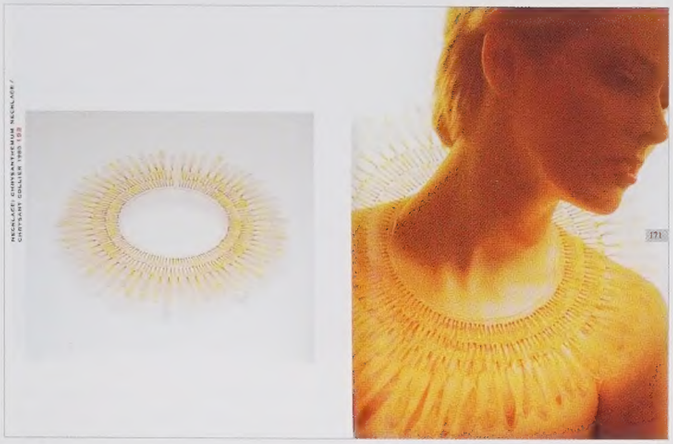
Ida van Zijl, edited by Yvonne G.J.M. Joris
Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2005

One of the best things about a retrospective book is having a window into the mind of an artist, meandering from idea to idea, watching as obsession evolves into recurring theme. Gijs Bakker is arguably the most famous, and certainly the most prolific, jeweler in Holland. He and Droog Design, the team he created with Rene Remakers, embody the classic postmodern stance—ironic, witty, iconoclastic, fiendishly clever, a little arrogant. *Gijs Bakker and Jewelry* accompanies a retrospective exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum's-Hertogenbosch in 2005. Writer Ida van Zijl has also written about Bakker's industrial designs in *Gijs Bakker/Objects to Use* (010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2000), a good companion to the jewelry book, and in some ways, an even more readable, linear chronology. In it van Zijl explains a fundamental attribute of Bakker's work, "[t]he relationship between man and the object he uses or wears."

Explanatory notes—"pull-outs" in red—create a jumpy and discursive document and draw the reader all over the page. Not knowing the history of Dutch design makes the meandering narrative a little hard to follow. But there is a tantalizing reference to the severe design stereotype known as Dutch Smooth, and van Zijl made me want to learn more about the controversy over Calvinism and the humanism of Erasmus. The many footnotes suggest other ideas worth pursuing. A reference to Marjan Unger's survey of Dutch *sieraad* in the twentieth century discusses the transitional state of Dutch art education in the late 1960s. As innovative as Bakker, his classmates and his fellow student (and eventual wife) Emmy van Leersum, were, they didn't come out of nowhere. Their teacher Marinus Zivollo trained his students in classical craftsmanship, the value of which Bakker acknowledged only later in life. Yet surely it is this uncompromising foundation that contributed to the leadership of Dutch jewelry design in the 1970s and marks Bakker's designs early on, even as he endeavors "to seize control of the material and to force it into almost impossible forms."

Despite early promise, Bakker's trajectory has been anything but linear, and van Zijl describes the following decade as a frustrating and unsatisfying time for him, as number of his product designs went unfulfilled. The jewelry, on the other hand, was to become iconic. Invited in 1974 by Peter Skubic to a steel symposium, Bakker produced the skeletal "Profile Ornaments" most often seen in photographs framing van Leersum's face. In fact, there was a whole "family" of them, showing that jewelry could be minimal without being geometric. For another invited exhibition a few years later he created his "Bib" neckpiece, in which a black and white photograph of the wearer's chest was printed on a piece of fabric, edged in black and worn around the neck like a baby's bib. These radical approaches to adornment underscore Bakker's commitment to the fundamental issues of jewelry—it begins with the human body. It is significant that Bakker and van Leersum declined to identify their work as sculpture, but always as jewelry.

I'm dwelling on the introduction because it contextualizes the work and illuminates the voluptuous photographs that follow. Reading it allows you to appreciate both the oversized laminated flower necklace that commemorates van Leersum's early death in 1984 and the repeated appearance of objects "shot" through with holes. Beginning in the 1980s Bakker used the format of photographic and appropriated images trapped in PVC, from brooches of colorful floral arrangements studded with precious gems, to the necklace in which Michelangelo's Adam, with his outstretched finger, sits in a gold circlet, as if on a celestial swing, to laminated newspaper photos of athletes in similar treatments, or in



fruit dish, a candleholder chair, and a tablecloth. All together they show Bakker's interest in space and perception: how much material can be removed and still be seen as "whole."

Following the introductory essay are seventeen categories, among them "quest for a new form," "the physical form of the jewel disappears," "space" and "I don't wear jewels, I drive them." Huge images, one piece per oversized page, appear in chronological order, accompanied by occasional quotes by Bakker. Some of the statements blatantly contradict each other, such as "I have never been interested in handmade things and I am in fact, suspicious of their charm" and "I dislike jewelry....I like jewelry because it is

The lighting casts a golden glow on the entire page and now each petal casts a magnified and elongated shadow on her skin, while behind her head, the back of the necklace rises, transparent, into the air.

Christ-like postures. Less well known is the "Royalty" series, which includes photos of queens. He also riffs on the eroticized body presented in advertising, and some works are sprinkled with gems. Bakker places the human body inside the jewelry, as in his *Embrace* necklace, in which a life-size laminated photographed figure (Bakker) surrounds the neck of a live model.

Seeing Bakker's work in person is often surprising because of its size, and the book's outsized photographs reflect this scale. It is impossible to appreciate the flower neckpieces without seeing them on the model. Take *Chrysanthemum Necklace* (1983) for example. On the page it is a pure, transparent circlet of three tiers of individual chrysanthemum petals in graduated sizes from neck to torso. Floating above the page it creates a suggestion of a shadow and attention is drawn to each pale golden leaf. The facing page shows the piece on the bare neck and shoulders of a young, blonde model. The lighting casts a golden glow on the entire page and now each petal casts a magnified and elongated shadow on her skin, while behind her head, the back of the necklace rises, transparent, into the air. On the body it gains an erotic dimension not apparent without the model, showing its relationship to the witty, sexy necklace *Johnny Awakes*, where laminated photographs of penises of graduated sizes stand in for pearls.

A bracelet series from the 1990s, in which several bullets are "shot" through a virtual sphere and the resulting hollow silhouette fabricated out of metal is less well known than, for example, the nearly contemporaneous *Liberty Brooch* for Madeline Albright. The accompanying *Bracelet with Holes* (1992) and the "Holes Project," mirror the "holes" wallpaper, a ceramic lampshade that doubles as a absolutely superfluous." The provocative concept that "...The form is just the wrapping of an idea" accompanies images of the deep impressions left in the skin after thin bands of gold have been worn on legs and waist, work that appears to anticipate Norman Cherry's investigations.

Jewelry seems to allow Bakker the most room for mulling over an idea, as shown in the "Holysport" series, in which "he replaced the head and arms of the crucified Christ with those of the soccer player Krystof Bociek who used to pull his shirt over his head and run with his arms outstretched whenever he scored a goal." The hooded star simultaneously mimics the crucifixion, satirizes sports as religion and references both the anonymous hooded victims and the perpetrators of violence committed in the name of religion. Van Zijl affectionately observes that "Bakker can milk an idea until every last drop of inspiration has gone."

Despite the introduction's occasional confusion (possibly due to the English translation), Van Zijl presents a warts-and-all portrait of the artist. She doesn't shy away from reporting on Bakker's arrogance or petulance, especially demanding in setting up early exhibitions or deliberately designing the aluminum collars so that they would be too large to fit in the display cases in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. But that kind of criticism only humanizes an artist whose prodigious output would be otherwise completely intimidating.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.

STUDIO

by Jennifer Cross Gans

Jack and Marilyn da Silva

Most jewelers and sculptors are quite satisfied to have one studio of their own. Between them, Jack and Marilyn da Silva have four—each have one for their day jobs, Jack's Metals Design Studio in El Sobrante, California is a third, and then there is their favorite place of all, affectionately known as "The Shed."

"Shed" suggests images of weathered or rotting timbers, garden tools, firewood, or if you live in the country, maybe chickens. However, the da Silvas live in Pinole, an East Bay suburb of San Francisco, and their shed is nothing like this. It's a neat, 110-square-foot Victorian dollhouse in their backyard, not unlike the cottages built for some of the refugees from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. For both, The Shed is a haven where, as Marilyn says, "everything melts away." It's a special delight in summer, when the door opens to a lawn, flowers and flowery bushes, and they can sit outside on the deck. It's a welcome escape from their hectic day jobs—hers as head of metals at California College of the Arts, Oakland, and Jack's as a 3-D arts instructor at Evergreen Valley College, San Jose, where in addition to teaching, he is helping design the metals and sculpture studio for the new arts building, due to open in 2009.

The Shed is a hard-won shelter. The couple was comfortably settled in their home and studio in Oakland, only to have it destroyed by fire in 1993. After a protracted, but ultimately satisfactory insurance settlement, they moved to Pinole and tried working in the garage of a rented house. When claustrophobia set in, they moved and bought their own place, which came with the basic structure of The Shed. It took a year of hard work to convert the former tool shed, which was solidly constructed and built to code, but was cold, dark and without either charm or amenities. The da Silvas put in electricity, insulation, heating, ventilation and eventually furnishings, including custom-designed tool racks. Adding windows not only improved the lighting but created The Shed's cottage-like appeal. The only amenity still lacking is running water, presently supplied by buckets and the garden hose.

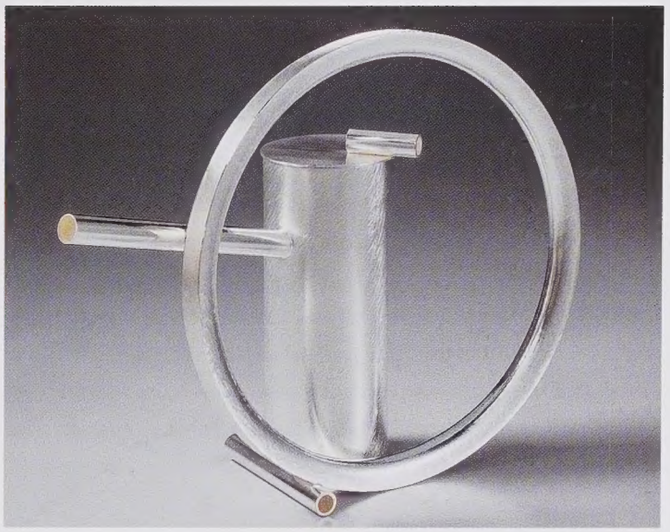
There was no room for large equipment, however, each of them had access to the casting facilities, rolling mills, sandblasters and hydraulic presses in their respective schools. Jack's oversize and blacksmithing tools remained in his design studio in El Sobrante, currently a staging area for his annual summer metals camp, called MAKER. Inside the tight little space they have fitted their essential hand tools, a generous collection of hammers, stakes and pliers, storage, a soldering station and a central stump, where Jack can do some of his raising. Each has their own work space: Jack's bench (formerly belonging to the enamelist Colette) is against one wall, and Marilyn's new bench (a splurge) by the wall opposite.

The sounds of raising and planishing soon intrigued the neighbors, who wanted to know what was going on. "What do you have there?" asked one curious man, who was promptly invited to visit. Conveniently the neighbor on the other side was elderly and deaf, and so far, the homeowner on the other side has not complained.

In the commute between studios, it's easy for important items to be left behind. Marilyn, a neat and thoughtful packer, carries her current project plus essential supplies in a small wicker basket. Jack has specific bags for his stakes and hand tools, and is becoming more organized, though has been known to turn back on the road to San Jose because he forgot something.

How does this couple, with very different artistic styles, work harmoniously in such an intimate space? Jack, a champion raiser, hammers a lot. His work, which often begins as a maquette, is steadily becoming more abstract. Marilyn's is becoming more elaborate and she draws a lot. Her signature birds are carved, or die-formed, chased, then colored with gesso and Prismacolor. They rarely work together on the same project. One exception was a spice box *From Hand to Hand* for the 2005 show at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco.

Their different schedules are a lifesaver. Marilyn has only a short



commute to CCA in Oakland. For many years, Jack worked several part-time jobs, finally settling at Evergreen Valley College in August 2005. To avoid the brutal 140-mile round trip he now spends most weekdays away from home, leaving Marilyn to reign over The Shed. Weekends and school vacations are more likely to find them working side by side, when they are not doing housework, shopping or walking their two Dalmatians. The arrangement also works because they enjoy a special partnership, based on marital closeness and professional respect. They regularly bounce design ideas off each other, critique one another's work, and talk to fend off the occasional bad mood or artist's block. They plan around each other's work, alternating chores, cooking and dog walking. "It's a real natural dance," said Marilyn, "We both understand each other's needs as artists."

In time, it's possible that even this harmonious couple will outgrow their studio. One option they are considering would be to move to a larger place, closer to Jack's work. Or they could stay and take advantage of their spacious backyard to construct a second studio a few yards away from The Shed...and the building fun would begin all over again.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

opposite page
Marilyn and Jack da Silva pose, American Gothic style, in front of their Pinole, California studio, "The Shed"

this page, clockwise
Jack da Silva finishing a teapot maquette
Photo: Ellis M. Gans

Jack da Silva
Roundabout (teapot), 2006
sterling.
8 x 10 x 4"
Photo: M. Lee Fatheree

Marilyn da Silva at her studio bench
Photo: Ellis M. Gans

Marilyn da Silva
Chatelaine for Audubon, 2006
bronze, copper, sterling, gesso, Prismacolor, found objects
15 x 10 1/2 x 3"
Photo: M. Lee Fatheree

FORUM

Jewelers on Jewelry

This text was abstracted from a transcript of "The Language of Jewelry: An Artist Panel Discussion," hosted by Tacoma Art Museum in June 2005 and held in conjunction with the exhibitions "Zero Karat: Jewelry in Non-Precious Materials from the Museum of Arts & Design" and "Beyond the Body: Northwest Jewelers at Play." The panel was convened by Susan Cummins, who also served as moderator. The five artists—Lisa Gralnick, Keith Lewis, Bruce Metcalf, Kiff Slemmons, and Sondra Sherman—were part of an exhibition curated by Cummins in 2000 called "Beyond the Obvious: Rethinking Jewelry." The questions the panelists were asked to respond to included: Why have you as an artist chosen jewelry as your medium of expression? What makes you particularly interested in this format? Why should collectors of your jewelry want to wear your personal expression? When you're looking at jewelry, how do you decide what value it has for you personally? An abridged version of their responses to these questions is reprinted in this Forum.

Lisa Gralnick Madison, Wisconsin

My initial attraction to the jewelry format was material and process-based. I simply loved the tools, the laborious and precise processes, the sumptuous materials and the intense process of problem solving indicative of the goldsmithing tradition. The delicate blend of creative opportunity emerging from a technical process that requires intelligence, mathematics, patience, analytical acumen, discipline, continued technical practice and, finally, humility in the face of an ever unconquerable giant fit my personality, my own long and drawn out idiosyncratic polemic conducted between an analytic mind and a romantic soul. In addition, the scale of jewelry has always been an important catalyst for me and it represents an element of containment that paradoxically has always been sorely lacking in all other elements of my life. I am by nature a boisterous undomesticated unruly sensualist with a big mouth, big heart and a disturbing lack of respect for boundaries. I'm given to grand gestures and the satisfaction of uncontrollable urges. The jewelry format, with its humbling smallness and sensible economy, is my own personal dominatrix. It demands that I have limits, that I entertain efficiency, that I restrain from taking up too much space on the planet, that I, in short, be everything that is against my nature. It has bullied me into near submission but the edge, if there be one, remains sharp because within that tiny three- or four-inch window I have still found a faint voice for that grand gesture that is my art.

In response to the question, "Why should collectors want to wear my personal expression?", I defer to the collectors themselves in the great hope that if my work is achieving any degree of success, their answer will approximate my own answer to the second question which is, of course, how do I personally evaluate the jewelry I am looking at? As I get older, I am less interested in what I like and I don't like, and more interested in work that fulfills my perceived obligations of an artwork, first originality or what has been called visual differences, whether this object differs from other objects that exist, the quality of being evocative or provocative. Next, whether there is a masterful or at least competent use of appropriate materials in the piece. The next one, scholarly competence, which I consider extremely important. Is the artist's work emerging from a fully informed position even if that position has not included formal education or training? Next, relevance to one's own time and place: Does the work offer something particular to its contemporary audience? Next, does it honor the tradition of goldsmithing, even if commenting on it? Next, intertexuality: Does the work participate in a larger discourse, both between itself and the other works of that individual artist's oeuvre itself and other works within its field, itself and other works of contemporary art, and itself and the historical art canon? Lastly, I would say an obligation is that the work have authenticity and honesty. Does the work represent an aspiration to a higher calling or is it produced with the sole intention that it is a commodity to be bought or sold, unless of course, it is attempting to make commentary on such.

Lisa Gralnick
The Gold Standard #16: Italian Shoes, 2005
plaster and 18k gold (1.07 oz. gold, corresponding to the value of the shoes and the price of gold on 8/17/2005)

Bruce Metcalf
Rhyme and Pun Necklace II, 2000
mixed mediums
diameter 11"

Bruce Metcalf Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania

I came to jewelry in two steps. First, it was metal that found me. I was an architecture major at Syracuse University and one of my buddies had become a jewelry major. He kept coming back up to the architecture studio where we were all suffering. He brought these wonderful little things that he was making out of metal that totally turned me on. After a frustrating senior year in architecture, I almost dropped out but then reemerged in the jewelry studio where, for the first time in my life, I felt at home in an activity. It was the material and the process that drew me there and kept me there. It is a concentrated activity with the hands to make these complex and difficult things that require a lot of training and a lot of skill. It is, in many ways, preindustrial and deeply old-fashioned, a Luddite technology that I respond to in an intuitive and profoundly deep way. I think it is rooted in a sense of being human, of having a body and a brain and needing to fashion a life that involves both these aspects, unlike much of what we do today, that keeps me making jewelry.

I also respond to jewelry because the best of it has a condensed intensity that I find absolutely transporting. These objects have been the focus of so much intention and attention and skill that they radiate this energy. There is a compactness and intensity that is very, very powerful within the best jewelry. I try to achieve that in my own work. Also, I'm a miniaturist at heart. There is something about the tiny world and the miniature cosmos that I think draws some people in—not everybody, but it certainly draws me into a sense of inhabiting an inner mental world, of being drawn into this other land. For me, good jewelry does that, and certainly the making of it does.

I have become interested in the fact that, after having tried to exercise all this control on an object—and I think most jewelers are total control freaks—after having intensively worked this thing for weeks or months, or in some cases even years, the completion of the project is to release it into somebody else's life. I actually don't finish the object. There is something really wonderful about the way that people can use jewelry to stand for themselves, either to create a fiction or to reinforce a fact about themselves in a social space. That process is totally uncontrollable and magical in its dimensions.

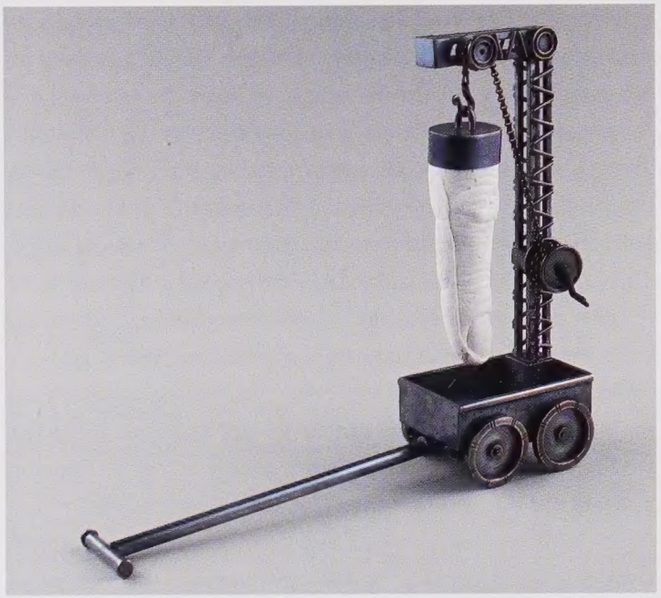
What do I look for in jewelry? I look for evidence of somebody else's imagination. What I do is try to manifest my own imagination. Which then brings up the first question: Why should anybody wear my work? When truly imaginative jewelry goes out in the real world and somebody decides to put that thing on their own bodies, it means that they are participating in a life of the imagination, in a way that is more than vicarious. In a sense, maybe I'm giving them a voice. I'm giving them an opportunity to express themselves in a way they might not otherwise be able to. I've found throughout the years that most of the people who buy and wear my jewelry are fairly strong-minded individuals. They don't really care a whole lot what other people think. They want to be different and my jewelry gives them a way of manipulating the way that they want to be seen.

I think it's easy to forget how different this stuff is from what people normally think jewelry is. I just can't stand going into jewelry stores because everything is so conventional. Yet I'm also aware that probably 98 or 99 out of 100 citizens in this country think those products are not only what jewelry is but what jewelry should be. So the jewelry that I, and everybody else at this table, makes is for those people who want to be outside, who want to be quirky, who don't want to be measured by the normal yardstick of things. That's what we allow people to do.

Kiff Slemmons Chicago, Illinois

I chose jewelry because it's small, you can take it with you. It's also not where you expect to raise questions or demonstrate deeper intellectual or aesthetic inquiry. To begin with, I didn't value conventional jewelry or its place in our culture. I dismissed my early efforts as any kind of serious endeavor. But ethnic jewelry, jewelry produced by non-industrial societies, was always exciting to me, both visually and conceptually. I liked that jewelry could have many layers of meaning, as it did in those cultures.

My early teachers were and still today are the anonymous jewelers from many different cultures whose work I continue to admire. Much of what I want to know about the world has come from the language of jewelry and I wanted to contribute to this vein of knowledge. I came in through the backdoor to making jewelry as an artist. My formal education was in language and literature.



Eventually that interest infused my approach to jewelry. I think now of Emily Dickinson's poem that begins, "We play at paste till qualified for pearl." Paste is a kind of artificial gem.

After ten years of learning to make jewelry, I realized that, in order for me to continue, I had to work differently. Ideas became much more important than formal aesthetic concerns by themselves. Materializing intelligence took over from then on. To paraphrase Emily Dickinson again, I played at jewelry till qualified for art. Often I've been asked why I don't make sculpture instead of jewelry—I'm sure we all get asked that question—or why we don't call jewelry small sculpture, implying that sculpture is art by definition and by scale. Bigger is more important. I like countering assumptions. I like that something small can be about something big and I like that something wearable can be more than decorative. For a long time, I've investigated the possibilities of intimate scale. Though most everything I've made is wearable, I really have been more interested in what can be held in the hand and observed at that distance, like reading, the idea of portable wonder. Working as an artist allowed me to be the most honest participant in this culture. Though I taught for a few years, I learned that it was the work itself and what it might do that mattered most to me. There are many ways to be a jeweler and one of them is to be an artist. There are many ways to be an artist and one of them is to be a jeweler.

I don't know that I think of what collectors should want, and I don't know that I think of my jewelry first as my personal expression. What people wear is their personal expression and if what they wear is my jewelry, then it's possible for the jewelry to function on many levels including as a site for art, as company, as provocateur. I'm just as interested in the presence that the work has off the body, as an object on its own and its power to communicate.

I agree with Marcel Duchamp, that art is art, once a connection is set up between the object and the spectator. Since jewelry, when worn, becomes more public, there is a possibility for a wider audience. Since most of my work does not involve the single masterpiece idea, I like when it is possible to show bodies of work in a public space like a gallery or a museum. Ownership then includes the people who see it. As Gary Hill put it, "Art belongs by right to the ongoing conversation between friends of the work, intimate lovers of the work, its enemies and all those whose world is informed and transformed by it." I like this kind of conversation. Sometimes, I think of individual pieces as souvenirs of larger lyrical events.

Kiff Slemmons
Finger Lift (Re: Lisa Gralnick), 2006
silver, cast plaster
cart: 5 x 6 x 1 1/2"
pendant: 3 x 1 x 1/2"
From the exhibition, "Re:Pair and Imperfection," Chicago Cultural Center, 2006

Sondra Sherman San Diego, California

I would say, first of all, that I feel like I "re-chose" jewelry. I started out thinking I would paint and during my undergraduate degree, for socio-economic reasons, considered jewelry and pursued that. After practicing for a number of years, I actually considered quitting jewelry, feeling that it was limiting what I could express. In that period of questioning, I came to recognize that jewelry could be effective in supporting values of individualism that were important to me in a way that other formats could not.

What I really enjoy about jewelry is due to its scale and location, that it has the aspects of a private experience and a public affect and that, whether the jewelry is actually wearable or not, the idea of wearing it and that reception in the public becomes part of the perception and the ultimate statement of the piece. I used to be very frustrated with the social expectations of jewelry and I came to recognize those as a psychological access point that enabled me to actually communicate with a broader audience than I felt was

Sondra Sherman
White Wing Planished Drop, 2005
sterling, 18k gold, yellow cubic zirconia
4 x 1 1/2 x 3/4"
Photo: Marty Doyle

possible in other formats. I really appreciate the interaction through the portability or mobility of jewelry and I also appreciate its social function as commemoration and celebration that relates directly to life and personal experience.

I hope that a collector would wear my work, my personal expression, because they identify with what they interpret the piece to express, or that they are advocates for the expression of that idea regardless of whether it is personally relevant to them as the wearer of art jewelry. They can participate in an active and public way in the contribution of artistic expression to our culture. For the collector, that is an opportunity afforded by jewelry that does not happen in other formats.

What I value most in art jewelry is originality and risk, and in particular, creating an experience not available by other cultural objects. As opposed to pure design, I want an object that might move me in multiple ways, intellectually stimulating, physically enhancing or bringing an awareness of physicality and having a thoughtful tactility, creating or expressing an emotional response. I'm looking for that multiple sensory and intellectual experience.

Keith A. Lewis Seattle, Washington

One thing that really attracted me to jewelry as an artistic medium is that it is so unexpected. There is a certain surprise when presented with something you might under another circumstance take as an artistic statement presented in the context of a piece of jewelry. So there is the possibility of bringing the jewel and the idea that it embodies into the presence of someone who hasn't necessarily mentally prepared themselves for the moment of discourse that the jewel represents. Because my work has typically been interested in somewhat confrontational subject matter—gay male sexual identity, the AIDS pandemic, the place and role of sex and sexuality in human life in general—one thing for me that has always been very powerful about jewelry is that you can bring statements about such confrontational subjects into people's faces before they ever realize they're there. Jewelry as a structure conspires with you to do that because the scale of jewelry induces an entirely different sort of regard than a large object does. Jewelry seems to have a kind of a gravitational pull that is way out of sync with its actual, physical size. So people find themselves slipping down that well before they have a chance to realize that what they're looking at isn't actually just pretty. In the case of my work, I don't want the stuff to look repulsive but it also might be a little more challenging or a little surprising to encounter in that context.

The other thing for me that ties the subject matter of my work intrinsically to jewelry is that it's centered around the imperatives and prerogatives of the body. Jewelry itself takes on part of its meaning, if not by actually being worn on the body, at least being considered as being worn on the body. Since my work has centered so much around other things that the body does, or wants to do, or is denied the right or the opportunity to do, jewelry sort of becomes a manifest physical indicator of my subject matter. I don't think there is another medium, with the possible exception of clothing design, where you could really explore the meaning of the body to the body through the body in that particular way.

As to how I feel about collectors or other people wanting to wear what I characterize as my own personal expression, there is that sense of completeness that comes when the thing leaves your hand. If someone shares the statement or the belief or the position or the stance or the experience of the piece of jewelry, then there becomes a sort of a direct transfer of meaning from the maker to the wearer. But what's always excited me more are identifying the resonances and meanings that form in work after it leaves my hand by virtue of the fact that someone else owns it. I've been lucky to know a number of the collectors who collect my work fairly well. One collector has been very generous about lending a particular piece of mine to several shows, and we talk about the piece as if it were a child. It happens to be a figurative piece and so, well, Sebastian is in Germany now. It's very curious because I don't think about them that way, but that odd reversal, that odd mirroring back, that creates a different relationship between me and the jewelry because it is being cared about or invested in, in an emotional way by another person is very interesting to me.

Keith A. Lewis
"...vai virar..." ("... shall become..."), (Meditation on Brazilian identity through the War of Canudos), chatelaine, 2005-06
sterling silver, 18k gold, copper, enamel, mirror, acrylic, photograph
4 3/4 x 5 7/8 x 1 1/4"

Over the Top

Contemporary Objets de Vertu

by Andrea DiNoto

The term *objets de vertu* connotes a category of the decorative arts comprised of small items made from precious materials—gold, silver, gemstones and enamel, but also ivory, quartz crystal, amber and other natural substances—and executed with a high degree of skill. (Vertu is from the Latin, meaning excellence and having artistic quality.) Almost always, such objects, which can date from antiquity but whose pinnacle was reached, arguably, in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have a purported use—as snuff boxes, caskets, ewers, loving cups and the like. However their true raison d'etre is to demonstrate the virtuosity of the jeweler/goldsmith while reflecting and honoring the wealth and status of the owner, or in the case of devotional objects, such as jewel-encrusted medieval chalices and reliquaries, the glory of god.[1] Whether on an earthly or heavenly level, *objets de vertu* could be said to have a function beyond conventional concepts of luxury.

Johann Melchior Dinglinger and Balthasar Permoser
Mohr mit Smaragdstufe, 1724
ebonized pear wood, emeralds, tortoiseshell, gilded silver, rubies, sapphires, topazes, garnets, almandine
height 25 1/8"

The goldsmith Daniel Brush, one of four artists considered here, and whose work more than qualifies as *vertu*, suggests that "objects of enlightenment" might be more apt a description for luxurious items that brighten the mind or the sensibility of the viewer. (Think of the enameled and jeweled eggs—each with a "surprise" hidden inside—made by Carl Peter Fabergé for the Russian imperial family from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century.) Strictly speaking, jewelry is not part of the definition, but in looking at contemporary objects of artistry, rarity and luxury, the work of certain individuals demands attention.

Royal regalia and jewelry were the original precious objects, and they performed an important function as an indication of status, power, wealth and tradition. At first, princely collections consisted solely of opulent jewels, but in 1500, the ancient notion of a "universal collection" put forth by Pliny in *Historia Naturalis* (77 AD) was re-introduced by the Medici in Florence; and within a hundred years, the idea had been exported northward to the princely domains in Austria, Germany and Scandinavia.[2] One of the greatest of these collections was founded in 1560 in Dresden by Elector Augustus I who embraced the Medici's medieval and Renaissance vision of the world that held no distinction between natural and manmade objects, so his collections, housed in what was called a *kunstkammer*, or art cabinet, included everything, from jewels to biological specimens—exotica like nautilus shells, coconuts and ostrich

Daniel Brush
Ten Butterfly Box, 1991-93
pure gold, steel, rare earth magnets
3 x 3 3/4 x 3 3/4"
Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

Kent Raible
The Pregnant Chalice (sculpture), 2002
fine silver, 18k yellow, white and red gold, chrysacollas,
sapphires, rubies, diamonds, opals
height 8"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

eggs—to scientific and artistic objects such as tools, scientific instruments, clocks and mechanical devices and the like, all of which were considered of interest as the "product of one universal creativity."[3] For over 200 years, the concept of the *kunstkammer* evolved under a succession of Dresden electors (ruling princes), so that by the eighteenth century, under Augustus the Strong, it functioned as a private museum (the forerunner of public museums) and contained the de rigueur carved rock crystal vases and bronze figurines from Italy along with many elaborate pieces from the goldsmith workshops of Dresden and Nuremberg.

One of the elector's most prized treasures, among his many mineral specimens, was an impressive cluster of 16 emeralds in matrix from Colombia, which he had received as gift from the King of Poland. To properly display this treasure, Augustus ordered that a stand be made for it. The resultant blackamoor figure, carved of ebonized pearwood by Johann Melchior Dinglinger and Balthasar Permoser, is surely one of the most breathtaking *objets de vertu* ever made. The figure, proudly presenting the emeralds on a carved tortoiseshell tray, is itself adorned—neck, arms, torso and legs—with magnificent jewelry of gilded silver set with emeralds, rubies, sapphires, topazes, garnets and almandine. The figure's tattoos and gilded, gem-set crown of "feathers" suggest that the moor was intended to represent—rather unconvincingly to contemporary eyes—an American Indian offering the treasures of the New World to an amazed Europe. The materials embodied in the figure represent the vast natural resources of Saxony, and as such, it was as well an image of nationalistic pride. The eight palatial ground-floor rooms that housed the moor and numerous other astonishing objects became known as the "Green Vaults" (for the pale green color of the walls of the original room); and in September, with the long-anticipated opening of the Green Vault Museum in Dresden, one of the world's greatest collections of such "princely treasures"[4]—thousands of medieval, Renaissance and early Baroque works, which had been safely hidden away starting in 1942 with the onset of the second world war—went on public view. These priceless treasures, representing the national patrimony, were thus spared destruction during the fire-bombing of Dresden in 1945; and incredibly, the four Green Vault chambers were the only rooms that remained standing after the entire city of Dresden was destroyed. Restored to their rooms in the Dresden Palace in the rebuilt city, the Green Vault objects[5] will be displayed against mirrored walls and on gleaming lacquered cabinets.

In the twentieth century, with the fading of monarchies and the subsequent rise of democratic republics in Europe, the commissioning of splendiferous objects made to commemorate an event or honor a distinguished personage fell less to princes than to wealthy businessmen, corporations and institutions who invariably enlisted the services of the major jewelry houses like Tiffany & Co., Cartier, the royal jewelers Asprey & Garrard and Bulgari. This practice was in evidence as early as 1900, at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, where the centerpiece of Tiffany & Co.'s display was the Renaissance-revival *Adams Vase* designed by the firm's brilliant Paulding Farnham and commissioned by the directors of the American Cotton Oil Company to honor their chairman "in gratitude for having saved the company from financial ruin."[6] The commission stipulated that it be made of exclusively American materials. Now owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the vase's all-over cotton-blossom motif is wrought from yellow-green gold mined in Forest City, California, and set with colored stones and pearls all from the United States. Farnham's fame as a designer extended to a collection of floral jewels made from native-American gemstones, notably a nine-inch-long Montana-sapphire iris brooch, now in Baltimore's Walters Art Gallery. Farnham also designed a remarkable collection of enameled, botanically accurate orchid brooches, one of which (*Orchid Brooch No. 19*) sold at Sotheby's in 1993 for $415,000. In 2000, Tiffany design director John Loring was asked by a reporter from *The New*

In the twentieth century, with the fading of monarchies and the subsequent rise of democratic republics in Europe, the commissioning of splendiferous objects made to commemorate an event or honor a distinguished personage fell less to princes than to wealthy businessmen, corporations and institutions...

York Times why the company had revived other flower jewels but not the orchid brooches. Loring said: "If only I could find someone who could enamel that well, I'd make the orchids, too."

A search among independent goldsmiths for contemporary *objets de vertu* leads to a few artists of prodigious skill and mythic reputation whose work celebrates, even revels in, the gorgeousness of precious (and other) materials while interpreting the past in decidedly modern, and intensely personal, ways. In England, the goldsmith Kevin Coates, who has been dubbed "Britain's Leonardo" by the magazine *Harpers & Queen*, works closest to the European tradition in fulfilling numerous commissions for commemorative objects, for both individuals and institutions. In America, peerless work in sculpted steel and pure gold by Daniel Brush represents a breathtaking level of skill and artistic achievement that is further enhanced by the personable artist's aura of exclusivity. Kent Raible's work in high karat gold with a palette of rare colored stones, exudes an unapologetic regal opulence that references ancient prototypes. And David Freda—goldsmith, naturalist and wildlife illustrator—works a unique form of orchid alchemy to make the exquisite, very limited-edition brooches sold through the Tiffany catalogue. Pieces by these artists reside in the contemporary equivalent of princely collections, and often in the real thing. A look at each in turn reveals a central fact: true luxury only begins with precious materials—it is the investment of an individual artist's time and the expression of an aesthetic philosophy that imparts ultimate value.

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The Object as Narrative: Kevin Coates

It's a rare artist who starts most days playing a Mozart violin sonata duet with his wife, but such is Kevin Coates, an accomplished musician and mathematician as well as jeweler. Coates has written extensively and evocatively about his own work, which is invariably called "figurative" in style; though he bridles at the label as a put-down, insisting that those elements "almost always exist within, and are part of a larger abstract or abstracted context."[7] The Coates iconography mines myth, folklore, opera, storybook fantasy, and literature, and he often creates highly theatrical tableaux that capture moments of drama or psychological tension, as in the 1977 "*Die Zauberflote*" (The Magic Flute) brooch that, on one side, depicts two characters from the opera in an abstracted stage setting. For jewelry and table pieces, his figures of humans, animals, and mythological beasts sport finely modeled fingers and toes, talons, beaks, fur, feathers, and scales and are arranged in animated postures that suggest the style of the narrative illustrator, and in fact many pieces include text and arcane symbols. He has written of the "enormous privilege" he finds in the "opportunity to work through the deep treasury of precious gems, minerals, and metals...at times a true confrontation with 'prima materia'—with the very elements of Creation."[8] But Coates uses materials less to dazzle than to interpret a scene, or even illuminate a text, as with a cup commissioned by Nevada poet Elaine Dallman. Coates chose to place the words to her Edenic poem "Snakes to Apples" on a silver ribbon that weaves, together with a golden serpent, through a base of entwined human figures, while above, the glowing green cup (the green of Eden) carved of brilliant nephrite jade, nests in a circle of alluring coral apples. In 2003, Coates created what he considers to be one of his most important commissions, *The Charter Bell*, which commemorates the founding of the Goldsmiths' Company by royal charter on March 13, 1327. The graceful design, an actual trumpet-shaped bell of 18k gold and lapis lazuli is surmounted by the Goldsmiths' Demi-virgin (the crest of the Company's arms), a sculpted female figure depicted in sixteenth-century court dress holding scales and touchstone. In typical Coatesian style, the artist imbues the object with a wealth of meanings. The rim of the bell is inscribed with a verse,[9] written by Coates, intended to convey the "silent message" of the goldsmith's philosophy: the testing and purity of chosen metals "as metaphor for the more noble parts of our own nature, and, by context the highest aims of the Goldsmiths' Company." The bell's flared rim is embellished with signs of the zodiac in gold,

Kevin Coates
Double Bell for the Table: "The Charter Bell," 2003
18k gold, silver-gilt, lapis lazuli, blackstone, stainless steel
15 1/3 x 9"
Photo: Clarissa Bruce

set against a mosaic of lapis, alluding to the "particularly benign" star chart for the "birth" of the Royal Charter. Even the bell's tone, which sounds the note D, is significant. D is sung *Re* in the diatonic scale, and since *Re*, in Italian, means king, Coates deems it a note "suitably royal for the Company." Long before a certain best-selling writer co-opted the word, Coates had been encoding his work with just such complex symbology worthy of an epic tale, one in which the artist himself might star as a character as layered, mysterious and compelling as any of his works.

The Object as Meditation: Daniel Brush

There are many stories that Daniel Brush likes to tell. One is about his 1998 one-man show at the Renwick Gallery, "Daniel Brush: Gold Without Boundaries," that introduced him to the world-at-large, although he'd been working for over 30 years. Brush particularly loved the fact that some people thought it was a show of work by multiple artists, because he hates the thought of being categorized. "I was so pleased there were nose prints on the glass, it meant people looked." People did look and were awed—at the domed box of mastodon ivory and fire-blued steel covered in 78,000 beads of miniscule, perfectly placed granulation, tiny yet immense in concept and awesome in execution; at the carved steel box covered with ten pure gold butterflies attached by powerful magnets; and at a game of "pick-up" sticks—its steel container ornamented with a golden bee—that demonstrated his complete appreciation of Japanese art.

...Brush's work "transcends any traditional boundaries between art, craft and design imposed by language.

Daniel Brush
Largest Dome, 1983-87
22k gold, mastodon ivory, fire-blued steel
3 7/8 x 3 3/8"
Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

Brush thinks of himself as a painter, which he is, but it is only his absorption with Zen philosophy that begins to explain the transcendent quality of his work in metal. Brush got into gold when he couldn't afford a wedding ring for his wife Olivia, so he learned how to make it himself. Goldwork, as it turned out, provided him with "balance," from the stress of painting and Brush approached it, as he does his life, as a meditation, adhering to certain daily rituals, studying and thinking deeply and learning everything about craft and materials (he worked in a steel mill to learn about steel). He makes his own tools and sells only to people who he is convinced would make "good stewards" of the work. Brush tells another story, of a woman who saw his book in a store window and managed to track him down. Brush invited her to visit his New York loft, where she told him how once in Mexico she'd suddenly found herself covered by thousands of butterflies. "I got immensely touched and inspired," he says, so much so that he spent three years making gold butterflies for a piece she eventually purchased and set in a room specially built for it. Ralph Esmerian, a noted collector who owns "40 or 50" of Brush's pieces and prefers to call himself Brush's friend and believer rather than patron, describes him as "that voice in the wilderness," an apt description of an artist of such singularity. David Revere McFadden, chief curator of the Museum of Arts and Design, believes that Brush's work "transcends any traditional boundaries between art, craft and design imposed by language. If our eyes are windows on the soul," he continues, "these works speak directly to the soul and fill the viewer with that unique combination of awe, mystery and pleasure that only the most creative and intelligent individuals can achieve." Others have called Brush's objects "sacred," "sublime," and "enigmatically beautiful,"[10] all terms appropriate to work that is so spiritually invested. Whether they can be called *objets de vertu* in the traditional sense is doubtful, but in the ultimate sense of *vertu* as excellence and enlightenment, Daniel Brush's objects qualify unconditionally.

Kent Raible
Floating City (brooch/pendant), 2005
18k gold, platinum, chalcedonies, opals, blue and pink sapphires, moonstone, chrysacolla, pink spinels, tourmaline, diamonds
1 3/4 x 2 x 3/4"
Photo: M. Lee Fatheree

The Object as Vision: Kent Raible

"I like using the rarest of color. The rarest green garnets, all kinds of tourmalines, fancy sapphires, holly agate from Oregon, a sun stone with flashes of copper platelets running through it, rich bright stones without a lot of inclusion." The interplay of color and gold in Kent Raible's opulent jewelry is decidedly modern, although the underlying impetus is inspired by ancient Etruscan styles. His gorgeous designs—what one collector calls "intricate and resplendent"—are distinguished by bold, geometric settings accented with Raible's trademark granulation work. One of his masterworks is the three-dimensional *Floating City* brooch, based on a major neckpiece of the same name that was acquired for the permanent collection of the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., in 1996. Like the pendant created for the neckpiece, the somewhat smaller brooch depicts an abstract, multilayered fantasy city

complete with miniature temples that rise above and descend from a circular band of diamonds. (The neckpiece pendant also includes a miniature version of the Emerald City of Oz.) Equal parts jewel and precious object, the brooch, says Raible, represents "the archetypal dwelling place of human potential, and, more personally, the fulfillment of my own aspirations and spiritual unfolding." He makes about one a year (none are commissioned) and, at a substantial five-figure price, they all sell. "I don't think about the luxury market," says Raible. "It means big diamonds, expensive cars, but I am selling to the same people." Khaled Al-Awar, owner of the Primavera Gallery in Ojai, California, sells Raible's jewelry to customers who have collected it for years, and who have been know to cry "tears of joy" upon receipt of an eagerly anticipated piece. In 2002, Raible took a four-month time-out from jewelry to create a free-standing table piece that he said was inspired by a dream. Called *Pregnant Chalice*, it is a large hammered silver egg on a jeweled base consisting of four white-gold columns around a central helix of sperm forms. With a tip of the hat to Fabergé, the blatant fertility symbol manages to be both majestic, humorous and even a bit subversively postmodern *objet de vertu* perfectly suited, as Raible's jewelry generally is, to modern-day princely sensibilities.

The Object as Artifice: David Freda

Deconstructing living orchids may seem like an odd first step for a jeweler, but in the case of David Freda it is business as usual. Enamellist extraordinaire, Freda brings scientific observation and exactitude to his art—he is a trained naturalist, wildlife illustrator, taxidermist, falconer and, most recently, orchid enthusiast. A few years ago, he showed his work to Tiffany & Co. and he's been engaged with them ever since, supplying enamel-on-gold orchid brooches for the store's catalogue. Freda is in effect the second coming of Paulding Farnham, the Tiffany designer who created a famous series of enameled orchid brooches in 1889. Farnham's orchids were

Enamellist extraordinaire, Freda brings scientific observation and exactitude to his art—he is a trained naturalist, wildlife illustrator, taxidermist, falconer and, most recently, orchid enthusiast.

David C. Freda
Tiffany Orchid 16 (Pacific Sunsplash), 2006
18k gold, diamonds, enamel
3 x 3 3/4 x 1 1/4"
Photo: David Behl
Collection of Tiffany & Co., New York, NY

sketched—each different and based on an actual plant variety—then executed by Tiffany craftsmen. Freda's orchids are modeled, petal by petal, on the living flower then cast in gold, enameled, and accented with Tiffany-supplied diamonds, and sometimes a dusting of 24k gold granulation. Freda does every part of the job himself—each brooch takes a month to produce—including cold-connecting the flower parts with tiny golden screws, setting the diamonds and attaching the complex pin stem with spring-loaded mechanism. The finished brooch is as much a marvel of nature as artifice, enameled in realistic colors back and front. "If I wasn't a wildlife illustrator I'd be lost," says Freda, who compares working with powdered glass (enamel) to watercolor, as colors can overlap. Freda sometimes allows gold to show through on the edges of the petals, but otherwise, diamonds not withstanding, the brooch is a precious replica of the plant, with gold as its hidden, internal essence. The brooches are not marked with Freda's name, only Tiffany & Co., but, says product manager Marta Kamieniecki, "even without his name, David's aesthetics are recognizable in the

articulation of every single detail." Freda names René Lalique as a major influence, but it is raw Nature that has always driven him. (For pure shock value, no one has topped his earlier work—a necklace of hatching snake eggs and another depicting the lifecycle of the stag beetle, all rendered in enamel with uncanny, frightening realism.) His work with Tiffany now takes precedence over all else. The store's request that he enamel on gold presented a new challenge—"the hard part is the compatibility of glass on soft gold," allowing him, he says, "to really focus on the project and perfect my techniques." There is a waiting list for the orchids and one wonders who in the world the fortunate owners are so far. "Word has leaked out," says Freda, that a certain king of a certain Middle Eastern country bought three of them. In the realm of the precious, one is never enough.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer who specializes in art and design.

1 In the eleventh century, Abbot Suger of the cathedral of Saint Denis, northeast of Paris, famously declared that the wealth of gemstones used in the embellishment of the church served to honor God and transport the viewer to higher realms.

2 Archduke Geza von Habsburg, *Princely Treasures* (New York: Vendome Press, 1997), 8.

3 *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), 75.

4 Von Habsburg provides a lavish account of such *kunstkammer* objects dating mainly from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century.

5 A selection of these objects were presented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2004 exhibition "Princely Splendors," probably the last time they will travel outside of their place of origin, according to the museum's director.

6 John Loring, *Pauling Farnham: Tiffany's Lost Genius* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 46.

7 *Kevin Coates Goldsmith* (exhibition catalogue, 1991),15.

8 *Kevin Coates Jewelworks, Fragments: Pages Stolen from a Book of Time* (exhibition catalogue, 1999), 5.

9 "By touch of stone I sound for man/the truth of noble metal:/Such gold and silver are, in turn,/The test of man's own mettle."

10 Ralph Esmerian, Paul Theroux, Donald Kuspit, David Bennett, and John Bigelow Taylor, *Daniel Brush: Gold Without Boundaries* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 55, 62.

David C. Freda
Tiffany Orchid 15 (Green Pygmy), 2006
18k gold, diamonds, enamel
4 x 3 x 1 1/4"
Photo: David Behl
Collection of Tiffany & Co., New York, NY

Between Whimsy & Gravity

The Sculpture of David Smith

by David Cohen

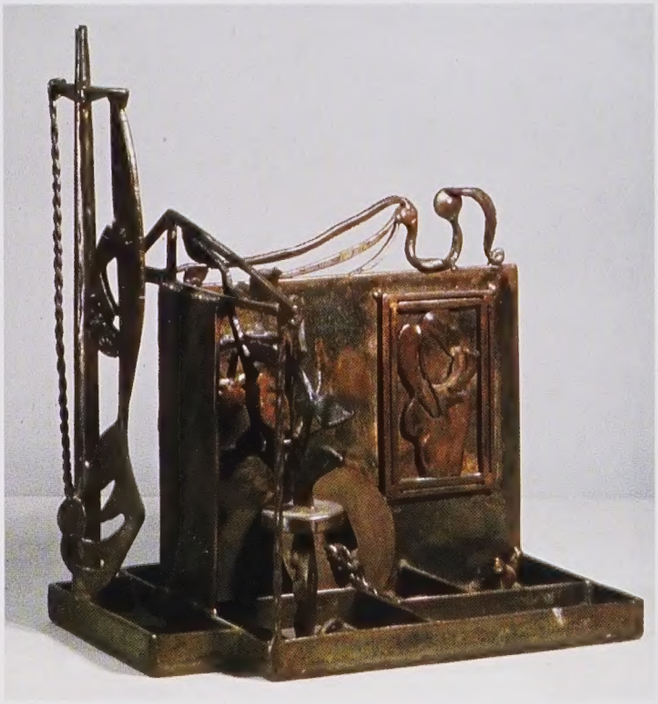
America has produced great sculptors, but none as protean as David Smith. The centenary of his birth was recently marked in New York by a major retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and a concurrent museum-quality show at the Gagosian Gallery devoted to the figural aspect in Smith's work.[1] And yet, between them, these exhibitions omitted significant series of works, and could not fully represent the way in which, from around 1950 (his mid-career breakthrough year) he started to work in—and think in—series. His property at Bolton Landing in upstate New York encouraged a new perspective on sculpture in relationship to the environment and to other works, leading him to produce sculptures in form families—clusters in which the whole is greater than the sum of parts. The monumentality of Smith's serial vision was better represented in a set of annual shows of Smith at New York's Storm King starting in 1999. Nonetheless, what did come across clearly in the centenary exhibitions were Smith's remarkable freshness and verve. For one of the most critically contested and widely imitated artists of the mid-twentieth century, this in itself was remarkable.

The Guggenheim show acknowledged the vital significance of sculptural serialism in the stunning display of eight from the 1955 series of pieces each titled *Forging*. Anywhere from 70 to 90 inches high, and essentially reading like sticks or poles, these works in varnished steel epitomize Smith's project. At once sleek and charged, severe and primitive, they take his aesthetic to a minimal extreme while still insisting on figural possibilities. They are very "formal" in their purity of means—their very name, at once noun and verb, stresses pure gesture rooted in engaged process. There is something elemental in the sense of metal beaten into expressive submission. The rod that takes that beating is not so much a form in itself as the embodiment of what has been done to it. Critics have observed how "forging" relates to "painting" as a title favored by Smith's abstract expressionist confreres to push the sense of getting down to gestural basics.

Forgings, 1955
Installed at Bolton Landing,
New York, ca. 1960
Photo: David Smith

Smith was an artist who lived up to his name, with its timeless connotations of sweat and skill. He started out as a painter and was guided towards three-dimensional expression by Jan Matulka. The Czech painter taught Smith at the Art Students League and afterwards privately, in his own studio, and was acknowledged by Smith as his formative influence. Matulka encouraged him to experiment with collage, to affix bones and other materials to the pictorial surface. Soon the built-up canvas flipped 90 degrees to

Forging VI, 1955
varnished steel
79 1/4 x 9"
Photo: David Heald
The Estate of David Smith



for their formal language—and Smith acknowledged eclectic interests: as well as Picasso and Cubism, he took avid interest in the de Stijl group, Russian Constructivism, German Expressionism, "even Surrealism" (this to David Sylvester in 1960, reflecting by that date a formalist suspicion of the Surrealist movement that was actually the strongest influence on his art of the 1940s). Like other pioneers of American modernism, Smith was a synthesizer, helping himself to what he liked from movements that, within their European context, represented conflicting worldviews—like Surrealism and Constructivism. Welding was metaphorically the best means to forge a synthetic language because of its inherent elasticity and capacity to bolt together disparate things.

After short spells in Europe, Smith came to realize that America was crucial to his artistic identity. Adopting the methods of the factory and his mid-western blue-collar heritage was a sure means of asserting national as well as a class identity. You could say that in his technical process he came to reflect

Welding was metaphorically the best means to forge a synthetic language because of its inherent elasticity and capacity to bolt together disparate things.

become a support for sculpture. Smith retained, however, many of the ambitions and attitudes of a painter—his penchant for frontality and his desire to draw in space could arguably be attributed to groundings in two-dimensional expression. He counted painters among his closest peers and continued to paint and draw throughout his career, and to pay great attention to the surfaces of his sculptures, their color and their texture. But the blowtorch and the anvil were deeply natural tools to Smith.

The artist grew up in Indiana and Ohio, his father a telephone engineer and part-time inventor. Later, Smith recalled his "profound regard for railroads" as a kid who played on trains and in factories as if in nature. He worked in 1925 at the Studebaker automobile factory, as a riveter and spot welder, and during the war (in part to pay for renovations of his property in Bolton Landing) he returned to industry, working several years in a tank factory. So although his metal sculpture epiphany came around 1930 from looking at reproductions of Picassos in *Cahiers D'Art* (which he would discover had been made with Julio Gonzalez) he was to the manner born, so to speak, as a sculptor in the medium of welded or forged metal.

Industry gave Smith a sense of his American-ness. In the 1930s, he and his fellow abstract pioneers looked to Europeans American industry as surely as his close friend in the 1930s, Stuart Davis did iconographically in his paintings. David Anfam, an essayist in the Guggenheim catalogue, cites the literary historian Bill Brown on how the railroad, automobiles, Bessemer steel, cantilever bridges, planes, typewriters and the like, entered American consciousness in a time of rapid transition—especially intense during Smith's youth—from rural to industrial.

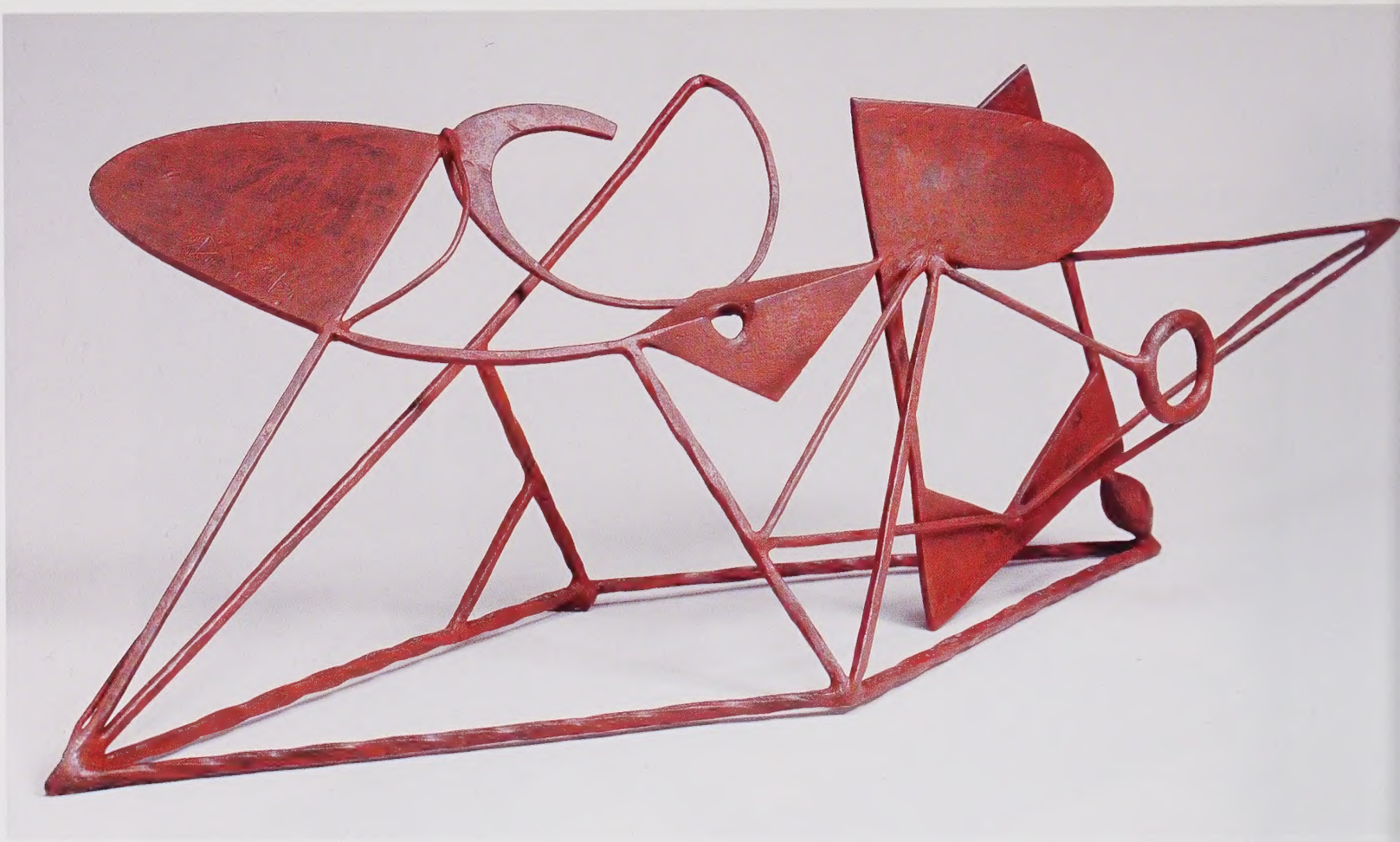
A man of the left, Smith's use of industrial methods definitely had laborer connotations, but it can't be over stressed that his stated ambition was to create a viable abstract art, and that he saw himself in opposition to the nationalism of the regionalist school and the programmatic agenda of social realism. This is a classic tension of artists in that period; seeking a purer, more mature and sophisticated personal language in abstraction, but rooted nonetheless in the values and aspirations of the time.

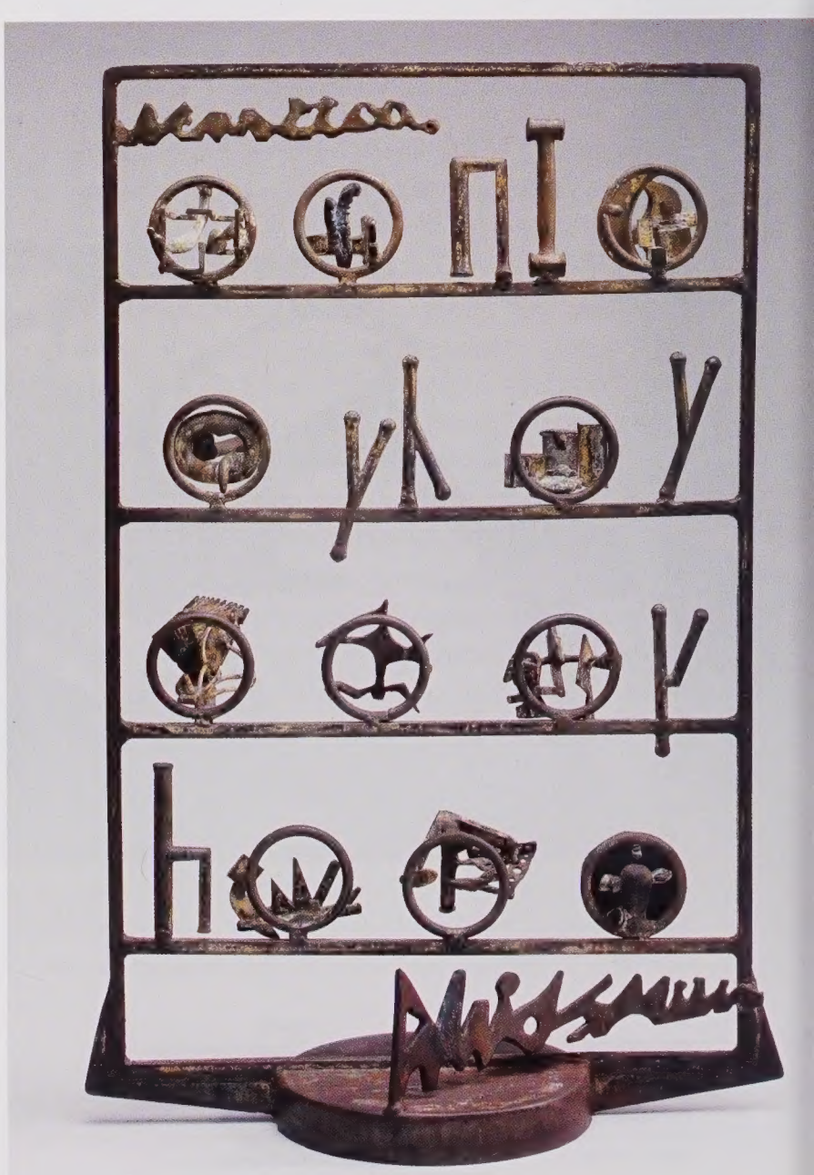
Pride in the organic relationship of maker and machine permeates Smith's oeuvre and cuts across any perceived divide between his pioneer modernist beginnings and his formalist maturity. *Home of the Welder* (1945) is a stage set in which the modern sculptor plays the role of aesthete with a blowtorch. The base is a compartmentalized tray that sports a worktable with an armature, chains, cables, a hoist and, hanging on the wall, a Matissean nude in cutout. Fast forward to *Voltri XIX*

Home of the Welder, 1945
steel
21 x 17 3/8 x 14"
Collection of the Tate Gallery, London

top
Reliquary House, 1945
bronze, painted steel
12 1/2 x 25 1/2 x 11 3/4"
Photo: David Heald
Colllection of David and Audrey Mirvish, Toronto

above
Cloistral Landscape, 1946
steel, bronze, stainless steel
12 x 24 x 7"
Photo: David Heald
Collection of Geraldine and Harold Alden, Los Angeles





clockwise from top

Aerial Construction, 1936
painted iron
10 x 30 7/8 x 11 1/2"
Photo: Lee Stalsworth and Christopher Smith
Collection Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

The Letter, 1950
welded steel
37 1/2 x 25 x 12"
Photo: David Revette
Collection of Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, New York

David Smith with *Australia* outside his home in Bolton Landing, New York, ca. 1951
Photo: David Smith

(1964), a work from a marathon series in which he produced twenty-seven sculptures, all of monumental scale, in a thirty-day period. The series takes its name from a disused steelworks lent to Smith by Italsider, the Italian national steel corporation, during his residency at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto. Smith reveled in what he described as "the beauties of the forge shop, parts dropped partly forged, cooled now, but stopped in progress—as if the human factor had dissolved and the great dust settled." *Voltri XIX* is a sculptural collage of a corner workbench to which he has welded tools, anvils, a fragment of I-beam, a cylinder and various cranks. It can be read in the tradition of the sculptural still-life, but it equally has a radically informal quality, as if yanked from the disused factory, treasured for the arbitary poetics of its end-of-the-day disarray. As such, ironically, it prefigures later artists like Claes Oldenburg and Edward Kienholz whose environments brought a literal slice of life into an art context.

For all that he celebrates the nobility of the welding table and the connection of art to industry, Smith did not make a fetish of his adopted means as some kind of iconoclastic jab at traditional techniques. On the contrary, he was happy to carve or to model when those means seemed appropriate. As he once stated: "I don't choose to close out any method." Sometimes he could combine radically discrete means within a single work, to expressive ends: *Royal Incubator* (1949), for instance, which uses bronze, steel and silver to differentiate contrasting animal and vegetal elements. More dramatically, *Cloistral Landscape* (1946) suspends a polished bronze, biomorphic figure within an ambiguous steel cage, offering a deliberate contrast between the shiny, elongated figure, and its inanimate yet fluctuating surroundings. At the ends where it meets its steel supports, though, the bronze form melds effortlessly into the steel.

Cloistral Landscape relates to the contemporary *Reliquary House* (1945) where the title makes explicit a dichotomy between figure and surrounding. There are several "characters" in bronze disported amid an open structure in brown-painted steel, and the reliquary reads like elements from a partially assembled prefabricated structure. The largest bronze character, set on an elevated ledge, recalls Giacometti's *Disagreeable Object* or even a 1930s Henry Moore, and seems to offer Smith's forecast on the future of sculpture: even though personages in the loosest sense remained a theme in his work, figurines are the kind of sculpture from which he was in the process of disengaging. Read as a manifesto piece, *Reliquary House* privileges the open environment over the contained personage.

A fascination with birds and flight went hand in hand with formal possibilities of welding thin strips of metal into open-lattice structures or of simply drawing lines in space. *Aerial Construction* (1936) in red-painted welded iron suspends various shapes within an open pyramid base of rods thrusting the sculpture in a uniform direction, an abstract essay in motion. *The Royal Bird* (1947-48), a more archaic and skeletal form, uses the jagged edges of the welded strips to express ferocity and menace.

Lyricism would return in a series of radical "drawn in space" open, linear constructions from 1951, including his landmark works *Australia* and *Hudson River Landscape* (two sculptures which, along with the late *Cubi I* (1963) were reserved at the Guggenheim for the Rotunda, the first and last works seen by visitors). These are among Smith's most "painterly" sculptures, creating a strangely disembodied sense of viewing strong, confident lines that have been fluently brushed into the air. While they encourage the viewer to find the vantage point that maximizes the flattened composition, they reward being viewed in the round as well.

While they encourage the viewer to find the vantage point that maximizes the flattened composition, they reward being viewed in the round as well.

It is ironic that an anti-literary artist like Smith was drawn to letters and ideographs, and to representing the act of writing. His drawing in space technique may have encouraged these possibilities, or vice versa. *The Letter* (1950) demands to be read face on: a rectangular structure, open with evenly spaced horizontal bars, reads like a page; on each "line" appears a sequence of letters and pictograms. Attached top left and bottom right as script forms are the salutation and the signature. It is a witty comment on how sculpture is "read." It reverses, but clearly relates to, an earlier Smith device in which lines are incised through rectangular steel plates in a piece such as *Steel Drawing I* (1945) where frontal viewing is obligatory.

In the same year as *The Letter* came *17 h's* and *24 Greek Y's* which arrange the letters of their respective titles on tree-like structures where they assume figural appearances, reinforcing the bodily origins of alphabets, or the sense in which human movements and interactions are themselves a language. These works underline Smith's ability to free readymade or received

elements from their former associations when co-opted into the sphere of sculpture. *The Forest* (1950) utilizes shop-bought saws ratcheted with teeth to denote menacing tropical leaves. Forest iconography has a Surrealist pedigree to which this sculpture relates, but there is nothing juxtapositional or subversive in Smith's appropriating the toothed saws—the pigmentation of the sculpture ensures that found and fabricated forms cohere.

Much is made by Smith and his critics of his use of collage, and his relationship to Cubism, and yet the naturalness and ease with which he incorporated readymade forms had little to do with disruptiveness of European collage, whether Cubist, Dada or Surrealist. Smith didn't dig deep into the culture for his collage sources; instead, the materials used and abused are those germane to a forge or a welding shop: the tank parts of his "Tanktotem" series, or the farm implements of his "Agricola" series. Increasingly, the component parts and the fabrication process were of a piece. This harmonized his project with that of his abstract expressionist painting peers for whom a melding of gesture and iconography was paramount.

The "Voltri-Bolton" series from 1962, whose title connotes a coming home of the spirit of his Italian triumph, makes manifest use of elements and tools encountered in the sculptural process, rather than necessarily made for the individual works. *Voltri-Bolton X* creates a garland of geometric off-cuts on which are superimposed a cluster of pincers. *Volton XXVIII* (1963) is a return in bricolage form to such whimsical feminine personages as the humorously voluptuous *At the Bar* (1941): in the later sculpture, a sequence of geometric fragments suggest a curved spine; a giant spanner the feet; an open disk the head; a scooped out arc forms the hair, and so on.

The "Cubi," the last, most monumental and most austere of Smith's series, stack highly burnished stainless steel boxes into gravity defying formations. With the exception of a couple that take the form of apertures or gateways, such as *Cubi XXVII* (1965), they are his most in-the-round sculptures, eschewing the kind of optimum viewing point for which earlier works so blatantly hungered. They represent a departure in tone and strategy from anything that had come before. While some retain his loose sense of the figure, others are pronouncedly more architectural than figural. Previously, the norm was to use flat elements, or if three-dimensional then ready made ones like I-beams or metal tubing. Here, the components are individually constructed boxes that must have been somewhat deliberate and preconceived for the individual sculptures. Earlier surfaces were painted or left in their found state, tending towards a rough, grubby patina: whether raw or used, the surfaces induced empathy. The "Cubi," by contrast, are startling in their surfaces, simultaneously attracting and repelling light and affecting the gaze similarly in their brashness and brazen indifference. They are the most aloof of his works, in scale, surface and self-containment. More than any works produced previously, they seem to demand a relationship with nature to make sense: not just the open air craved by his drawings in space, but actual vistas. Nature alone can cope with the "Cubi" by offering resistance and acceptance.

More than any works produced previously, they seem to demand a relationship with nature to make sense: not just the open air craved by his drawings in space, but actual vistas.

When he was killed in an automobile accident in May 1965 Smith was clearly at a transitional moment in his career. His increasing interest in arranging his works out of doors, of

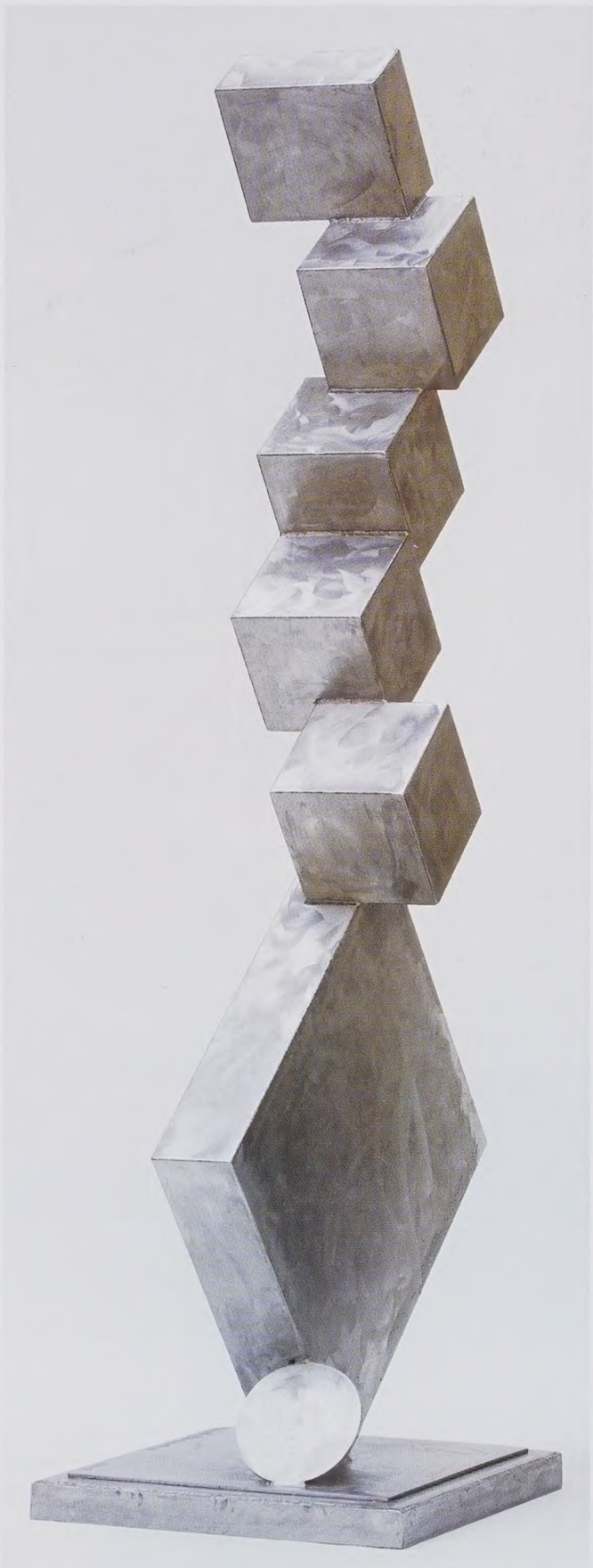
Agricola V, 1952
steel
35 1/2 x 28 x 10 1/2"
Photo: David Heald
Private collection, New York

working in series, and of using primary constructive shapes would have placed him in pivotal relationships with the earthworks movement, minimal art and hard-edged abstraction. But if, instead, the "Cubi" are read as a summation of a career that began as a fusion of European modernist styles and an American industrial sensibility, then this series—like much of Smith's work—encapsulates a tension between the way the works appear and how they came into being: between whimsy and gravity, freedom and toil.

David Cohen is art critic for the *New York Sun*, publisher and editor of *artcritical.com* and gallery director at the New York Studio School.

All works by David Smith are © Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

[1] The exhibition, *David Smith: A Centennial*, curated by Carmen Giménez, originated at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in early 2006 and will travel to the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and London's Tate Modern into 2007. "Personage," at New York's Gagosian Gallery, was organized by the artist's daughter, Candida Smith, with Peter Stevens and Ealan Wingate, and drawn largely from the artist's estate.



Tanktotem I, 1952
steel
89 3/4 x 39 x 16 1/2"
Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago

Cubi I, 1963
stainless steel
124 x 34 1/2 x 33 1/2"
Collection of Detroit Institute of Arts

Merrily Tompkins
Over Yonder

by Ben Mitchell

I like clues, layers, souvenirs, shrines, diaries, decay and deterioration, the nitty-gritty, the way stories overlap with familiarity and a shared humanness . . .
— Merrily Tompkins

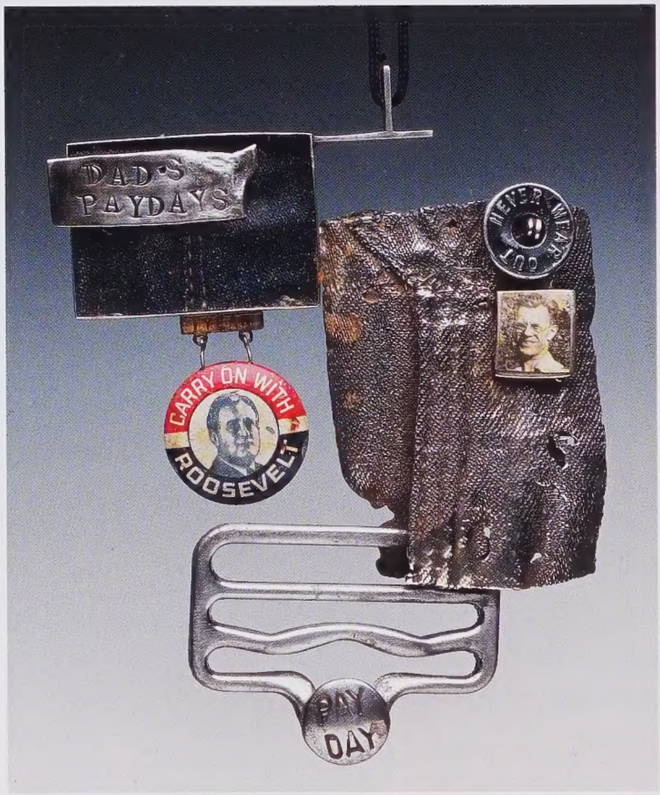
With a career that spans more than three decades, Merrily Tompkins is one of the Pacific Northwest's most imaginative and original artists and metalsmiths. But for some time now consideration of her work has been flying under the critical and curatorial establishment radar. That's a pity when you consider the depth and accomplishment of her work.

Tompkins came on the scene with an active and impressive early career. In 1970, she won "Best of Show in Metals" at the Bellevue Art and Crafts Fair—she was only 23—and the award included a one-person show at the University of Washington's Henry Gallery the following year. Two years later she earned the "Best of Show in Metals" in the Tacoma Art Museum's annual competition. The Bellevue and Tacoma shows were then a couple of the region's most important proving grounds for the new upheavals of Funk and Pop Art migrating up from the San Francisco Bay area into the Pacific Northwest. Clearly, Tompkins was up to something very early on. Between 1970 and the late 1980s her work was included in a number of notable group exhibitions, including shows at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. (1972 and 1973), the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York (1973 and 1975), the Bronx Museum (1978), and in the Washington State Governor's Invitational Exhibition (1972 and again in 1980). In 1979, she was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. During the 1970s and '80s she showed across the country and regularly throughout the Pacific Northwest. In the mid-1980s she had a number of solo exhibitions at Seattle's Linda Farris Gallery that received extensive critical review. Yet, although she was included in the Tacoma Art Museum's relatively recent (2001) "Torch Songs," a very good regional jewelry survey exhibition, the last time her work has been seen in any depth was in her 1999 solo show, "Fire in the Hole," at Seattle's short-lived Esther Claypool Gallery. In 2004, a modest group show of contemporary Pacific Northwest metalwork, "Jewelry as Sculpture," was organized for Gallery One, a space in downtown Ellensburg, in eastern Washington. But even in her adopted hometown, Merrily Tompkins's work was not included. So let's back up and see what we've been missing.

Diggin' It, 2006 (back)

Diggin' It, 2006
sterling, copper, brass, bronze, ivory, bone, shell, wood, champlevé enamel, found objects
5 5/8 x 4 1/2 x 3/8"
Photo: Rex Rystedt

Dad's Paydays, 1968
sterling, photograph, fabric, found object
4 1/2 x 4 x 1/4"
Photo: Lynn Thompson



Slow Boat (Portrait of Ken Cory), 1976
wood, champlevé and cloisonné enamels, sterling silver, brass, copper, found objects
5 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 5/8"
Photo: Lynn Thompson.
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: Helen Williams Drutt Collection, Promised Gift

There was a sea change in Tompkins' life that at least partially explains her relative quiet during these past years. After those opening decades of her active, rambunctious and fruitful career, in 1996 she separated from her husband, John Keister, the well-known Northwest television personality, and left Seattle, where she had lived for over twenty years. Packing up her three young sons, she drove east over the Cascade Range and returned to Ellensburg, where for several years in the late 1960s she was a student at Central Washington State College (now University). Back in 1968 she had transferred from the University of Washington to follow her brother, Don Tompkins (1933-1982), who was running Central's metals department—and making some interesting and important jewelry. A small, isolated college town in the heart of Washington's Kittitas Valley, Ellensburg—dusty, agrarian and provincial though it may be—has since the early 1960s been a remarkably vital epicenter for the Northwest's metal and jewelry community. Ramona Solberg, one of the most important artist-teachers in the Pacific Northwest's influential community of metalsmiths, was teaching at Central in the mid-1950s and 1960s before moving to the University of Washington in Seattle in 1967. In 1966 it was Solberg who brought Don Tompkins to Central to teach while she was on sabbatical. By all accounts, Solberg and Don Tompkins ran a terrifically lively department. Ken Cory (1943-1994) came in from Pullman, Washington, to take over the program in 1972 and Cory's groundbreaking metal work and influence on a large number of later artists is well documented. Today the wonderfully provocative metalsmith Keith Lewis runs the department, and continues the legacy.[1]

There is a story to tell about Ellensburg's place in and contribution to the upheavals in late twentieth-century American jewelry, and much to relay of Merrily Tompkins' vital role. Arriving back in Ellensburg in a gloriously banged-up 1967 Chevy Impala (she calls it *The Passion* in honor of its many resurrections), Tompkins bought Ken Cory's old home on 14th Avenue just a few blocks from the university, enrolled her three young boys in the public schools, built a small studio at the back of the lot beside her garden and set about the daunting work of being a working artist and an at-home mother struggling to pay the bills. In spite of steady moral and financial support from her ex-husband, she has done hardscrabble work as a landscaper, driven a tractor, kept a booth in a local antique mall and mended coveralls in exchange for an engine rebuild job.

Upon her return, Merrily Tompkins migrated back to the

place where she first began making art as a teenager in the late 1960s. The two touchstones for her earliest work are still resonant in the pieces she is making today. First, family: As a young girl she spent hours watching with fascination as her maverick father tinkered with all manner of things, and later as a youngster she studied with her brother Don in his metals classes at Central. The second influence that so shaped her spirit and aesthetic was her long and significant companionship and friendship with Ken Cory. Tompkins was never in any formal sense Cory's student; they were peers from the beginning. These relationships—father, brother and lover/friend—encompass an enduring influence on her working methods and on her inimitably frank, rowdy and eloquently unhinged aesthetic. Returning to Ellensburg essentially completed an arc in her life, a homecoming to an emblematic geographic and spiritual place—that elemental contour of all good stories.

H. Paul Tompkins, Don and Merrily Tompkins's father and their mother, Nydia, were schoolteachers, first in one-room country schools across the North Dakota prairies, and later in rural Snohomish and Skagit counties of Washington State, landing jobs in small, out-of-the-way towns like Index, Sunnyside, Bow and Rockport. "Oh my funny, difficult, oddball, collector father," Tompkins says. "He was a real salvage operator, dumpster-diving before they even had a name for it. He'd bring crazy shit home...sorting it all into some mysterious organizational scheme that made sense only to him. There were pocket knives, tiny perfume bottles, all kinds of costume jewelry and bangles, matchbooks, key chains, watch fobs, hair combs, pretty buttons. As a kid, I used to sneak in to where he kept the boxes of stuff and go through them for hours and just drool over everything." "And I grew up adoring Don," she remembers, "watching him work, instinctively drawn to the challenging process...and the mystery and the innate coolness of weaving the spiritual, the emotional, the cerebral, the visual, and the tactile all together in a piece of work you could make with your hands."

One of Merrily Tompkins' earliest works, *Dad's Paydays* (1968), is a lyrical homage to these loving and complicated memories of her father. He always wore overalls when tinkering about the house and working in his shop, and the Pay Day brand was his favorite. *Dad's Paydays* is structured very much like her brother's well-known found object and narrative-based pendants—the *Commemorative Medals*—which he was making at the same time. Composed of cast and fabricated sterling, fabric, a Roosevelt-for-President campaign button and a laminated snapshot of her father, the piece is suffused with a mysterious and personal narrative voice. We know the framed pendant form with multidimensional points of reference and narrative underpinnings was in the air, and you can see the influence of Don Tompkins's work, pretty unique in the field and paralleling some of the early Funk- and Pop-influenced work by those other pioneers, Sam Kramer and J. Fred Woell. Nonetheless, for a young metalsmith *Dad's Paydays* is a highly accomplished and smart piece of work.

Two other early pieces reveal the foundation that Merrily Tompkins has been building on since the 1970s: a belt called *Snatch Purse* (1975), and the 1976 necklace, *Slow Boat (Portrait of Ken Cory)*. *Snatch Purse* percolates with some of the essential and potent themes that run deeply in Tompkins's work: a celebration of femininity, a volatile evocation of sexuality and erotic playfulness, unabashed and unapologetic vulgarity (that title!), romping good fun, and the surprising collision of nontraditional and found materials. *Slow Boat* is a piece of unadulterated, memory-infused narrative. Startlingly, these works manage to be both decorative and primal.

These relationships—father, brother and lover/friend—encompass an enduring influence on her working methods and on her inimitably frank, rowdy and eloquently unhinged aesthetic.

I'm not sharing any news here by saying that early in the second half of the twentieth century a significant number of Pacific Northwest artisans summarily rejected jewelry's adherence to traditional precious metals and the slick and stylish forms inherited from Northern Europe, embracing instead popular culture, political posturing, humor, bawdiness and the use of unusual and found materials. From Solberg and Don Tompkins early on, to Ken Cory (and the Pencil Brothers work done by Cory and Les LePere), to Laurie Hall, Ron Ho, Kiff Slemmons, Mary Hu, Nancy Worden, and Keith Lewis, the Northwest, and Ellensburg right there in the heart of Washington state, was a special kind of funked-out Oz, a place for celebrating the overthrow of tradition, exploring a

newfound aesthetic freedom, and—ultimately—helping touch off an insurrection that reverberated throughout American craft. Merrily Tompkins was right there at the beginnings of it all kicking up some wonderful dust.

Snatch Purse—made of beaver fur (you gotta love that pun), ermine tails, leather, sterling silver, champlevé enamel, satin, shell, a Chinese coin, and a date pit—is loaded with totemic symbolism, outright raw and tasteless humor, and yet shows a striking subtlety. When the purse latch is activated the enameled train (pure Ken Cory) slides into the tunnel (pure Merrily Tompkins). Get it? The thing is meant to be worn mid-torso with the ermine tail hanging down the wearer's backside.

On the other hand, *Slow Boat* is a valentine, a gesture of deep friendship. The piece is a small-scale, narrative tableau, a little theater of remembrance that sparks a quiet but fierce charm. It also exhibits a remarkable technical facility—Tompkins fabricated an astonishingly close, miniature likeness of Ken Cory.[2] And like *Snatch Purse* it is kinetic; when you pull on the pencil Cory paddles and the canoe moves downstream. The work is steeped with intimacy, intuition and personal history. Cory and Tompkins spent a lot of time down on the Columbia or Yakima rivers camping, canoeing, making love, smoking dope (remember, it was a halcyon time), drawing, making temporary artworks they scattered in the woods and on the shore, and talking about art, always talking about art. And here's the kick: On *Slow Boat*'s verso there is an airplane-festooned domino that's hinged so that you can open the hatch and discover the delicate and complex mechanism tucked inside. With an understated, poetic, narrative gesture, Tompkins created a kind of private visual journal entry there. As is true in all our lives, what we show always includes something hidden. Throughout the years, many of the backs of her works record traces of a private, coded vocabulary of personal history—a secret diary.

What are the mysterious and ineffable sources and sustaining forces of creative juice? Isn't it always family first, however comforting or contentious that may be? Then the potent, imprinting forces of adolescent passions, infatuations, vanities. And later—inevitably, naturally—the long, slow tumble toward the smolder of middle age and all its dampened or focused fires. And though there is that gap of nearly a decade in Tompkins's work and production, here's the thing: after those years of struggle, isolation and introspection, not a drop of that juice has dried up. In the audacious spirit of her work there lives an unashamedly youthful, rebellious, joyous and animated evocation of personal history, unfettered invention and a searingly honest voice balancing on that oh-so-dangerous, delicate hairline edge between the trifling and the heartbreaking. Case in point, the 1997 *That Night*, a lyrically elegant necklace fashioned out of sterling, copper, brass and found objects. It is a vision, a metaphoric tale of a brief, wholly unexpected romantic encounter. The backstory is pretty straightforward. It all began on a dark, dead-end street by the railroad tracks at the edge of one of Seattle's outlying neighborhoods, then through the night moved on to several country-western bars, and finally wound up on a side street in the Capital Hill neighborhood as dawn came up and the birds began stirring. In the space of that long night fires were lit, secrets unlocked and revealed, the heart unchained. It was all about chance. *That Night* was the first piece of jewelry Tompkins had made in over a decade.

The tensions and oppositions there are excruciatingly delicate: the work is decorative and graphic, tender and erotic, theatrical and unruly.

So let's look at some of the more recent stories that Tompkins has been spinning in her work since *That Night*. A 2003 pendant, *Who's in Charge?*, is a primitive, riotously animated portrait of a couple. Two figures—one clearly female, but the other...?—are fabricated from sterling silver, copper, and brass, and then tricked out with moonstones and fossils. There is an offering. Nestled in its shell a pearl is bestowed—a terrific, sexually charged metaphor. Jointed and hinged, the figures dance and swing on a background of stamped pluses and minuses. The tensions and oppositions there are excruciatingly delicate: the work is decorative and graphic, tender and erotic, theatrical and unruly. And simply crackling with energy. As in much of Tompkins' recent work, there is no single meaning, but a suggestion of ideas. It is an effortless-seeming composition, handled with a raw yet subtle grace, possessing a strongly human and colloquial context. And in all of that richness, the lilt of a great story.

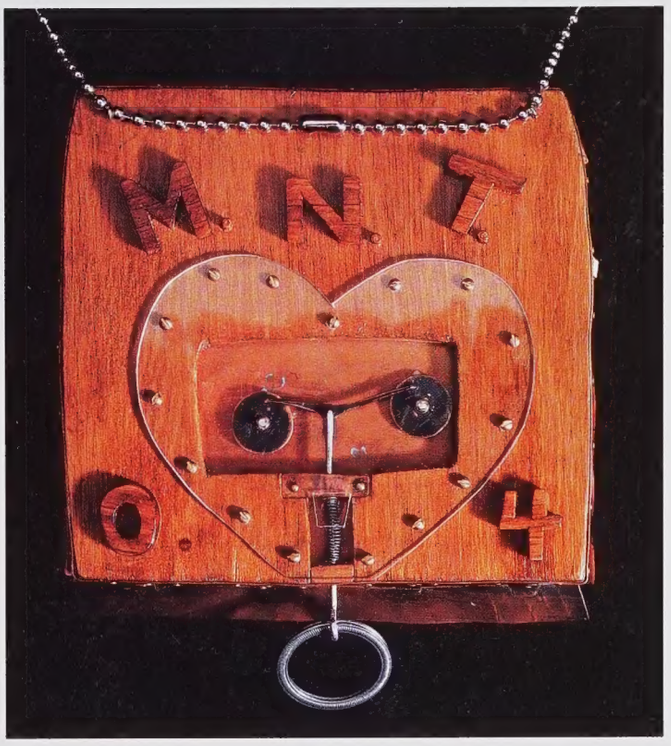
Ed Wicklander, one of Ken Cory's students from the early 1980s and a vital Northwest artist in his own right now teaching at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, says, "Her work is very soulful; it's about as honest as you can get. There's no bullshit in it...It's all there for you to see." For Tompkins these

ockwise from top left
natch Purse, 1975
erling, copper, champlevé
namel, leather, beaver fur,
mine tails, found objects
1/2 x 4 x 3/8"
noto: Lynn Thompson

Who's in Charge?, 2003
erling, copper, moonstone,
ssil, found objects
1/8 x 3 1/8 x 1/4"
noto: Rex Rystedt

hat Night, 1997
erling, copper, brass,
und objects
ach dress 2 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1/4"
noto: Rex Rystedt

Faith, 2005
sterling, brass, copper, a miniature
abalone shell, found materials
4 1/4 x 3 3/4 x 1/4"
Photo: Rex Rystedt



These two necklaces combine the personal and the theatrical with intense, visceral humor—however black that humor may be.

works are "objects with history and memory and mystery." She adds, "Teetering on the emotional, economic and societal edge for much of my life has fueled me to investigate my concept of faith as both impetus and comfort."

A couple of works that strongly reflect the edge and conviction that Tompkins has lived on, and the emotional courage and honesty she brings to her workbench, are the recent *Moonlit Repartee* (2004) and *Faith* (2005). A necklace that incorporates a length of ball chain from the hardware store's plumbing section, *Moonlit Repartee* is quite literally a stage set. On the fabricated copper boards, a man and a woman engage in one of the most common clichés invoked for a romantic relationship—the dance. They grin with a mask-like rictus. And here's the waltz: when you pull the ring at the bottom each character, jointed at the elbow and shoulder, reaches out and grabs the other's throat. Likewise jointed at the waist and pelvis, the two pivot and gyrate with abandon while their free arms wave wildly about. What could be more forcefully unsentimental, hard-nosed and clear-eyed? Making no attempt, either technically or emotionally, to show this couple as attractive or likeable, *Moonlit Repartee* is an animated and anxious record of that very boogie that anyone studying the piece, and grimacing behind your knowing grin, will recognize only all too well.

Faith, though sharing a strong kinship to *Moonlit*, is another matter altogether. Tenderly built out of sterling, brass, copper, a miniature abalone shell, and found materials, a woman with rope-bound ankles is caught mid-dive above a pool of water. Or is that the sidewalk? Like a dream or a cloud, the shell lies below. Who doesn't recognize, and feel, the jolt of emotion there? These two necklaces combine the personal and the theatrical with intense, visceral humor—however black that humor may be. Full of surprise and ambiguity, the works are made with wonderful precision and delicacy—in *Faith* it is as if Tompkins is "drawing" with the metals. As with the best authentic folk and outsider art, the honesty and integrity are unquestionable.

One caveat: Whether Tompkins' work, old and new, is faithfully "folk" or "funk" or "outsider" is likely beside the point, no matter how much we'd like to settle on some kind of handy confederacy for her. Helen W. Drutt English, noted author and curator in the field, finds her way through the frass of these categories this way: "There is in her work the very essence of a lack of refinement," Drutt English observes. "In understanding

Moonlit Repartee, 2004
sterling, copper, gold wire, wood,
Durham's putty, colored pencil, plexiglass
6 1/2 x 6 1/2 x 1"
Photo: Rex Rystedt

Moonlit Repartee, 2004 (back)

Merrily Tompkins, one must get past the expected technical precisions that dominate our judgments today and understand that her direct handling and use of materials is fused with her aesthetic concepts. As her ideas emerge, this union of mind and hand creates a unique 'flowering' of her narrative—a sophistication bound in decades of her personal iconography. In some sense the outside world has not touched her domain. She is still where she has always been—connected to those ideas central to a personal narrative which provides her with a singular presence that permeates her current oeuvre." There's the hub of it, beautifully said: Do we see this work as frozen in the 1960s and early '70s, a time when the hurly-burly and tumult of change was driven by Funk and Pop gestures, but time past? Or do we discover works made out of a deeply mined aesthetic that reflects a refined exploration of a place that the artist has chosen to create and to remain in, a place where she continues to courageously seek new risks and uncover new rewards?

"I'm interested in the small, private moments in people's lives," Tompkins says. "I think it could be reasonably argued that those moments are what ultimately drive the world. I like the tenderly rendered and worked-over, the soulful and divinely driven kinds of things, made ingeniously, out of whatever stuff folks have at hand, much like the way my father and my farmer-rancher uncles operated. Ed Wicklander calls it 'pure conjurin.'" And mind you, not all her work is necessarily personal. "Early on I was hugely influenced by Rube Goldberg and all those old *Popular Mechanics* and do-it-yourself magazines my dad had around the house," Tompkins says. "Sometimes it's not something that happens to me that generates the idea or the piece, it can be something as simple as a song lyric that gets me started. I'm just interested in making work that addresses the little things that add up to the big human bang."

There it is, the "human bang." Look at the 2005 *Hot Blood (Portrait of Marlon Brando)* and *Diggin' It*, a new work constructed of sterling, copper, brass, mother-of-pearl, carved ivory, wood, bone and found objects. Over the years Tompkins has created many portraits—of people she knows and those she doesn't—one of her deepest pursuits. The portrait, with its storied place in art history, offers the artist a fertile place for a potentially rich visual and intellectual engagement. As a portrait emerges from the artist's hands ambiguities can set in, inadvertent insinuations can arise, intimacies not guessed at may be revealed. *Hot Blood* is beautiful, tender and brimming with presence. *Diggin' It* is a bit of a different matter. Pull the bead at the bottom and the man's head bobs—you know, diggin' it. In this pendant some emanation of a larger story whispers out of a small, private moment. Endearing, sweetly melancholy and kind of hilarious, his mournful gaze at the phonograph is so wholly *momentary* as to freeze our hearts. Here the fleeting is writ large. You can almost hear the little man's sigh.

George Chacona, another of the Northwest's prominent artists who has known Tompkins' work for many years says it plainly: "She [Tompkins] and her art are a nether world; her sensibilities and sensitivities are so intimate and authentic. Feral and genuine, totally guileless and honest, she can't be touched by pretense." Tompkins says, "I'm not too concerned with doing things the 'right' way.[3] I like to work as immediately with the material as I can and not get caught up with what's thought of as proper technique. I guess I go at it like my Aunt Pearl always said, 'I'm gonna raise hell and put a prop under it.' My main concerns are getting the idea across and making a lovingly-crafted, beautiful little heartfelt thing loaded with passion and humor and empathy."

I like the tenderly rendered and worked-over, the soulful and divinely driven kinds of things, made ingeniously, out of whatever stuff folks have at hand...

Many of Merrily Tompkins' peers who share her roots in the Northwest and the Funk and Pop upheavals of the 1960s have moved in more conceptual, political, materialistic or technically oriented directions. Tompkins, following the path she shares with the enduring spirits of her father, her brother and her friend Ken Cory, together with all the echoes of the Bay Area Funk crowd and the rough-edged and naively-wrought art and lovely detritus with which she surrounds herself, has, through a long, delightfully novel and continually fascinating career sustained a passionate and faithful exploration of both the roots and the future of narrative in her art. In her long journey and its accruing stories she may be asking us a couple of the oldest and most enduring questions: *Who are we? How shall we live?*

Ben Mitchell is the curator of art at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane, Washington, and the author of *Play Disguised: The Jewelry of Ken Cory* (1997).

[1] See Michael Dunas, "Funk Art Jewelry: Ken Cory and the Pencil Brothers," *Metalsmith*, Spring 1988; Mathew Kangas, "Ellensburg Funky," *Metalsmith*, Fall 1995; Ben Mitchell, *The Jewelry of Ken Cory: Play Disguised* (Tacoma, WA, Tacoma Art Museum; Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997); Vickie Halper, *Soundings: The Jewelry of Ramona Solberg* (Seattle, WA: Bank of America/University of Washington Press, 2001); and Ben Mitchell, "Heart and Hand: The Life and Work of Don Tompkins," *Metalsmith*, Summer 2003.

[2] In regard to some technical matters, Tompkins says, "The metal figures (sterling, mostly) in the pieces are sawn and stamped. The tool I use most often for stamping is a toy screwdriver. When I'm making a bit that calls for some relief work, I usually just use my little hammers, or sometimes I use repoussé tools, pounding the work into my cherry stump. I use whatever is handy to achieve the effect I'm after."

[3] Tompkins says, "I think a lot about those guys in India and Thailand and throughout Asia, cranking out really beautiful metalwork, sitting on the ground, using the most basic, primitive tools. I'll learn a new technique if I have to in order to make the piece look the way I want it to, but I really do enjoy working as simply as possible."

right
Hot Blood (Portrait of Marlon Brando), 2005 (detail)
sterling, copper, brass, ivory, opals, wood, found objects
4 1/2 x 4 x 3/8"
Photo: Rex Rystedt.
Collection of Linda Johnson, Seattle, Washington

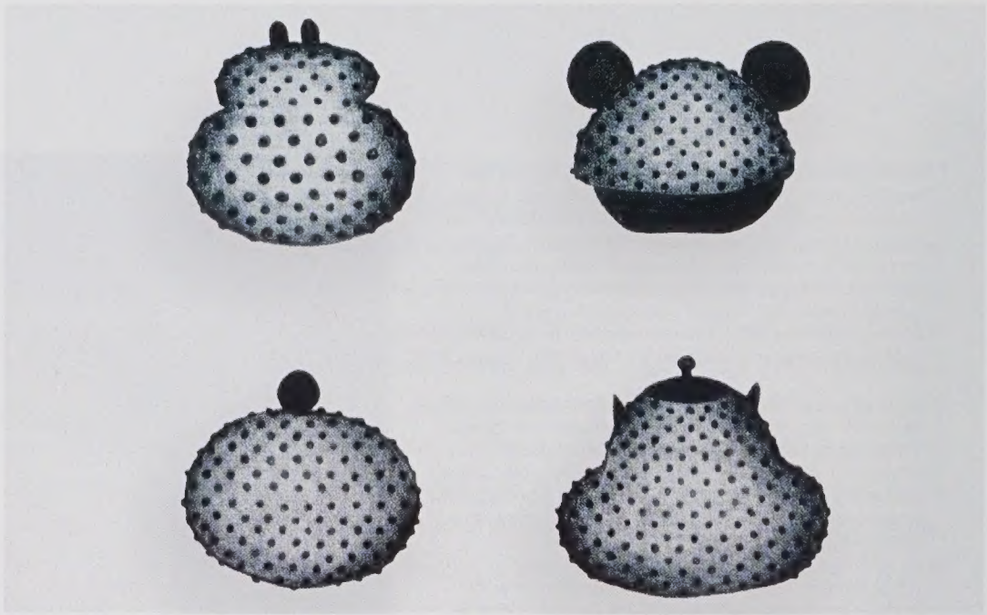
below
Merrily Tompkins' studio, 2006

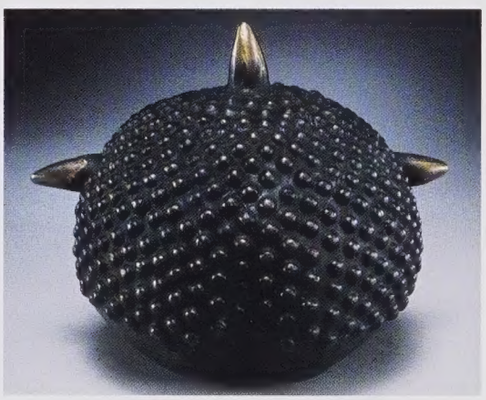
REVIEWS

"JUNKO IIJIMA: HYBRIDIZATION"

PUSHDOT STUDIO
PORTLAND, OREGON
FEBRUARY 1 - 25, 2006

by NAMITA GUPTA WIGGERS





Junko Iijima's installation "Hybridization" presents a contemporary reinterpretation of a Japanese object—the Nambu ironware teakettle. Set in the front rooms of Pushdot Studio, this small but dense exhibition consists of three studies: scale explored through digitally silk-screened banners; drawing through pencil sketches on paper; and objects with cast bronze and patinaed sculptures. Iijima's work seeks the edge of traditional craft, tapping both her heritage and contemporary art training to make objects that address her self-declared liminal position between the cultures of Japan and the United States.

Through her formal studies, Iijima explores a domestic object that carries the dual signification of modern Japanese life and the historical weight of the ancient tea ceremony. This vessel is a mass-produced item sold in department stores, as well as a handmade object created through more than fifty painstaking steps by master craftsmen trained through years of apprenticeship. Working in a style that matches the formality of the Nambu ironware, Iijima merges her own visual vocabulary with traditional aesthetics, creating objects that reconcile cultural influences through an engagement with historical process.

In the street level windows, two banners with drawings of dotted orbs introduce formal elements derived from Nambu ironware. These features are repeated throughout the exhibition in the manipulation of form, the mimicry of surface treatment, and the redefinition of a functional vessel as a non-utilitarian sculpture. Upon entering the space, one encounters a Zen-like sparseness. Additional banners define the edges of the room, much like Japanese *noren* wall hangings divide architectural space. The elegant imagery of the banners communicate process, depicting both sketches and completed objects, each marked with a graphic pattern resembling a Japanese chop-style signature. Moving from the serene simplicity of the front space, the interior room feels, by contrast, stereotypically "Oriental." Densely packed, the room is lined with alternating black-framed drawings and red pedestals upon which bronze sculptures are perched. The sensation is that of stepping back in time—a temporal shift into a stylized and historically stereotypical environment.

The first encounter, with *Object #1*, exemplifies the tight, formal focus of Iijima's project. This sculpture overtly references its origins; a Nambu teakettle stripped of its functional appendages of lid and spout, and reduced to a black orb embellished with hobnail patterning. The remaining sculptures are humorous, playful and engaging. They repeat the rounded form, replacing expected functional parts with Iijima's personal vocabulary derived from popular culture. As a group, the sculptures resemble a cast of Anime-like characters where mouse ears, hearts and cartoony backsides meld with age-old traditional domestic forms. The metal equivalent of fuzzy animals, they beg to be held and touched—and yet such fondling has the opposite effect as with ironware. Whereas ironware darkens with touch and use, handling Iijima's work results in the removal of patina over time and the reemergence of its brassy finish.

Iijima's earlier projects enlisted iconic pop culture characters like Hello Kitty and Mickey Mouse as vehicles to explore the blending of a global, commodity-based culture. Through the bricolage of interchanged parts, that project presented Japan and the United States as equal cultural influences. "Hybridization," by contrast, is an aesthetic examination through process dominated by Japanese culture. Rather than address the tension of being in-between, Iijima's project blends and mediates her heritage and personal iconography, but not her place between cultures as put forth in her artist statement.

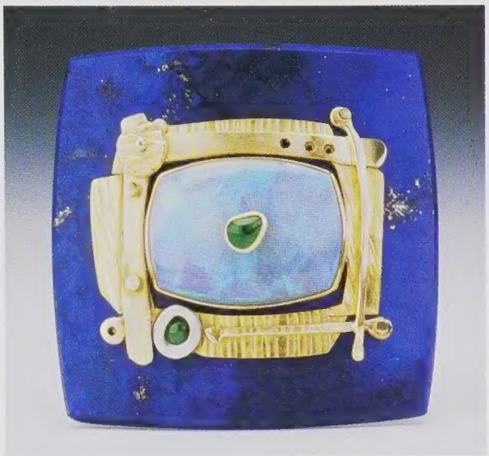
Using hybridization as the exhibition's title is, then, somewhat problematic, and immediately brings post-colonial theory to the fore. Theorist Homi K. Bhabha, for example, writes about hybridity as a "Third Space," a site or object that recalls a traditional/original reference, but that is something entirely new. Iijima's cast bronze sculptures constitute a fascinating and challenging body of work that points to hybridization, but does not embody it. Selected drawings, such as the window hangings, push form beyond expectation, echoing the traditional source in a more loose and dynamic manner. If explored as physical forms, they could break new ground and enter that "Third Space," moving the work away from formal repetition and into a reified hybridity.

Namita Gupta Wiggers is Curator of the Contemporary Crafts Museum & Gallery, Portland, Oregon.

clockwise from top
Hybridization: drawing study #3, 2005
pencil on paper
7 x 7"

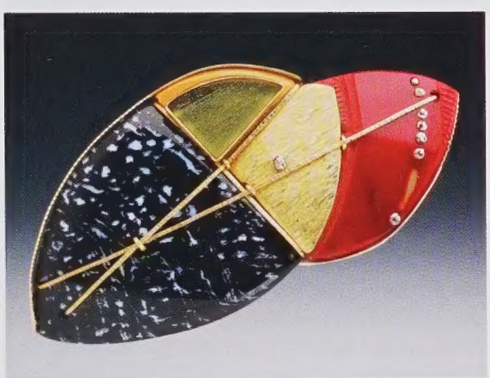
Hybridization: object study #4, 2005
cast bronze
6 x 5 x 5"

Hybridization: object study #5, 2005
cast bronze
6 x 5 x 5"



"MICHAEL BOYD: INTEGRATION OF STONE AND METAL"
SANGRE DE CRISTO ARTS AND CONFERENCE CENTER
HOAG GALLERY, PUEBLO, COLORADO
FEBRUARY 4 - APRIL 29, 2006

by ELIZABETH MCDEVITT



Michael Boyd's exhibition in his hometown of Pueblo, Colorado might well have been titled "Treasure of the Sangre de Cristo," for a treasure it was! Featuring over sixty works of art spanning several decades, this tour-de-force retrospective included many privately owned pieces that have never been exhibited before.

Boyd's work is a fascinating journey of search and discovery, and the creation of beauty and complexity. A master of metal and stone, with a background in painting, his knowledge of mineral colors is both profound and subtle. Many of the pieces in this exhibition feature unique and rare stones, some acquired in travels to mining sites in Asia and Australia and others found locally in the mineral-rich Colorado mountains. Stones are his palette.

A consummate lapidary artist, Boyd juxtaposes precious with non-precious stones, choosing color and texture to express his love of the natural world. This exhibit revealed the breadth of his inventiveness. In stone and metal (sterling silver, 18k and 22k gold), there were teapots, candlesticks, an exquisite caviar dish, a martini glass, a delicate jade and meteoric iron letter opener as well as jewelry. A carved soapstone necklace that Boyd created in the ninth grade revealed an innate sensibility, which is the hallmark of his work. Self-described as a young man who was "wild, out of control, always in trouble," his earliest foray into jewelry making channeled an artistic energy that is constantly evolving and fueling his enviable and unencumbered creativity.

Boyd's signature style is recognizable in his use of colorful and complex structures of stone and metal riveted upon stone, color upon color. Bracelets and necklaces are composed of multiple clusters, each of them a miniature sculpture. Often there is a hidden gem, known only to the wearer.

With his lapidary skills, Boyd is constantly experimenting and discovering new ways to reveal the potential beauty in stone. A bold ring with a mosaic of interlocking red and yellow Australian mookaite is crowned with three large, irregularly shaped pieces of Arizona black jade. By breaking apart yellow mookaite and heating selected fragments, he discovered the heat would transform the color into a warm, earthy red. Reassembled in a 22k gold frame, the pieces fit together like a puzzle.

In addition to earthy mineral tones, Boyd often chooses brilliant color combinations. A vividly blue piece of lapis lazuli, cut into a curved and beveled rectangle, is overlaid with an assemblage of textured gold fragments which are riveted together forming a frame around a stunning blue-green crystal opal. In the center of the opal and on the gold frame small, naturally polished Imperial jadeite pebbles from Thailand are nestled in gold bezels. Like all of the jewelry objects in the exhibition, this large and exquisite brooch is a miniature sculpture to wear.

As part of his creative process, Boyd "plays" with his ingredients, creating myriad, often kinetic, assemblages of metal and stone that offer endless inspiration for new pieces. Although he does not render his designs in advance, preconceived images provide concept and structure for the creation of his pieces. One is left to wonder about the source of inspiration for many of his works. A striking example is the "futuristic," brooch resembling a fantastic astrolabe, which was prominently displayed at the show. Fabricated of fused 18k and 22k gold, this agglomeration of Wyoming black jade, crystal opal, gem silica, heliodor, emeralds and multi-colored diamond beads was breathtakingly beautiful.

In a way, this was a very personal exhibit for Michael Boyd. Co-curator Jina Pierce selected a number of his art objects that he has acquired through trade with other artists over the past twenty years. Titled "Trades of the Trade," they were displayed in an area adjacent to the exhibition, providing the viewer with a window into Boyd's own collection.

In his own words, Pueblo is "the last unspoiled town on Colorado's Front Range." Boyd has a loyal local following, many of whom hope to be first in line to see his latest creations, a phenomenon that this exhibition reflects. In typically understated fashion, he describes his work as "just basic lapidary and metal fabrication"; "innovative with traditional techniques." There is nothing understated about Boyd's creations however, and "Integration of Stone and Metal" left this viewer longing to see more.

Elizabeth McDevitt is a goldsmith, teacher and art historian.

clockwise from top left
Ring, 2004
black jade, mookaite, black epoxy resin, 22k gold, sterling silver
1 1/8 x 1 7/8"

Brooch
lapis lazuli, opal, jadeite, 18k and 22k gold
1 7/8 x 1 3/4"

Brooch, 2005
black jade, mookaite, crystal opals, gem silica, emeralds, heliodor, diamonds, 18k and 22k gold
3 1/4"

Brooch, 2006
petrified wood, mookaite, moldavite, diamonds, 18k and 22k gold, sterling silver
3 1/2 x 2 3/8"

REVIEWS

"LUMINARIES: NEW WORK BY SIX AUSTRALASIAN JEWELLERS"

SCA GALLERIES, SYDNEY
JANUARY 28 - FEBRUARY 25, 2006

by TRACEY CLEMENT

"Luminaries" showcases the work of six contemporary jewelers: Australians Barbara Heath, Marian Hosking, Carlier Makigawa, Catherine Truman and Margaret West and New Zealander Warrick Freeman. As a sample of the best and the brightest, "Luminaries" is bound to provoke debate, an inevitability for any exhibition that contains so few exemplars. But what is beyond doubt is that these six practitioners are some of the most respected and well established jewelers in the Australasian region. They are the usual suspects: tried and true, but far from tired.

Over the span of a long career the capacity to become re-inspired by an old idea and to see the familiar with a fresh perspective, is vital. This process of creative rejuvenation is particularly evident in the suite of jewels presented by Carlier Makigawa. Her signature style is still recognizable, but her distinctive wire cage structures seem to have literally burst into bloom. The bangles, brooches and neckpieces in her "Hybrid" series resemble plants coming out of hibernation after a long cold winter; they are transformed into swelling pods and buds bursting with bright red stamens. While Makigawa's works are still quite abstract, clean cold modernism has made way for a zesty organic exuberance. The simplicity of her earlier work has mutated. It is as if her jewels have participated in a scientific experiment; doused in growth hormones or radiation, they seem to have undergone an accelerated evolution and are thriving.

Margaret West has also revisited and reinvigorated an old theme. Those familiar with her work will know that she has been making flower forms in marble for quite some time. In clean white or painted blue, these shapes seemed imbued with possibility; deliberately and poetically ambiguous. But West's new flowers are an unambivalent red: the red of blood, wounds and flesh. The floral brooches in her "Frieze: Ecco Homo (précis)" are an unequivocal reminder that we are a nation at war. Scratched, incised and smeared with paint, West's marble flowers bear scars: traces of battles and traumas, both physical and psychological. They morph into torsos, twisted and truncated (*Meat Indeed*, as one brooch is titled). Flat and four-petaled, West's flowers echo the wild red poppies that bloomed across the carnage of European battlefields in World War I, and that now punctuate lapels on Remembrance Day. West's marble flowers are a war memorial, but not to the glorious dead. Her 52 brooches, one for each week of the year, ask us to remember that despite the sanitized version we see on TV, war is bloody, horrific and seemingly without end.

For years, Warwick Freeman has been transforming natural materials into jewels that seem virtually untouched, despite his intervention. In "Luminaries," he extends this magic to plastics. From a distance the synthetic and the natural materials are difficult to distinguish; all of his forms look like they have been shaped by the forces of nature. A clever illusion since in reality the opposite is true; they have been painstakingly manipulated by the jeweler's hand. In the brooch *White Ghost*, a piece of Corian mimics a beach pebble, pierced and shaped by centuries of persistent rubbing in sea water and sand. In this piece a carving masquerades as a found object while in *Stone Carving*, a genuine pebble is simply mounted. Or is it? The title may be a clue or a mischievous deception. The brooch *Shell Carving* seems to have been munched by a giant caterpillar, leaving big comic bite marks in the opalescent surface. With consummate skill and understated flair, Freeman has the ability to make the impossible seem possible.

Marian Hosking presents stark black and white specimens of Australian plants cast in fine silver. They seem like floral ghosts or survivors from a fire; singed yet miraculously preserved. Hosking winds her metal leaves and flowers into loose wreaths and it is tempting to position these jewels as *memento mori*; a now familiar theme as the flora of delicate ecosystems is under constant threat. But this easy interpretation doesn't quite fit. There is something too defiantly joyous about Hosking's unassuming clusters of weeds. They are more a celebration of the tenacity of life than a reminder of the inevitability of death. Hosking pays tribute to certain qualities which she shares with both nature and her fellow jewelers in "Luminaries": persistence and a quiet strength that continues to transform, rejuvenate and grow.

Tracey Clement is a jeweler, artist and writer currently living in Sydney, Australia.

clockwise from top
Carlier Makigawa
Hybrid Branch (brooch), 2005
sterling silver, monel, coral
4 1/4 x 3 1/4 x 1 5/8"

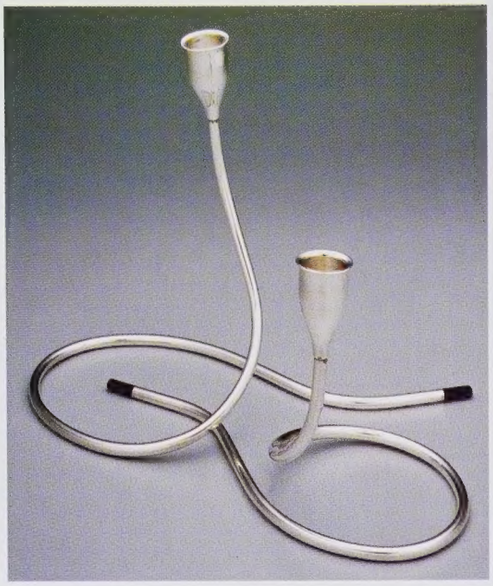
Margaret West
Made Flesh from series "Frieze: Ecce Homo (precis)," 2005
Carrara marble, paint, silver
3 1/4 x 3 1/4 x 1/4"

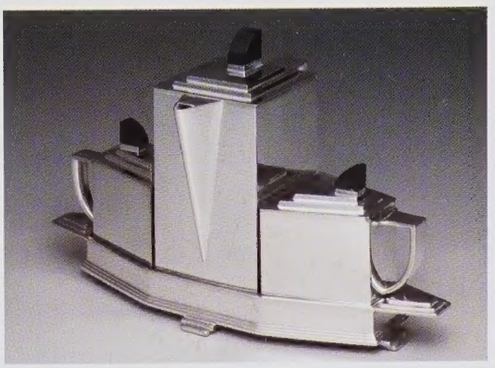
Warwick Freeman
Shell Carving, 2004
pearl shell, lacquer, oxidized silver
4 3/4 x 2 1/8"

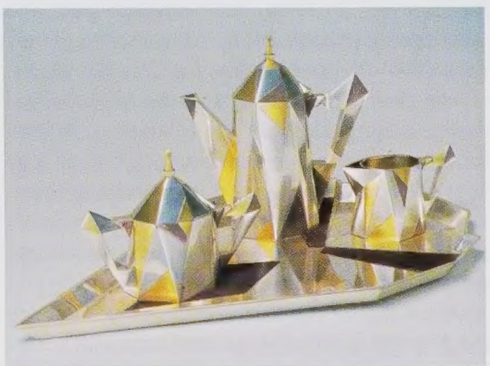
"MODERNISM IN AMERICAN SILVER"

RENWICK GALLERY, WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 16, 2005 - JANUARY 22, 2006

by SARAH TANGUY







This landmark exhibition, organized by the Dallas Museum of Art, offers a tightly focused look at the impact of Modernism and the changes in silver design and production from the 1920s to the end of the last century. Equally as important, it gives a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the shifting tastes and social contexts that fed the industry's ups and downs during this period. The story is told through more than 200 outstanding examples of holloware and flatware and through the companion catalogue, expertly researched and authored by Jewel Stern. Drawn in large part from Ms. Stern's collection of American silver, which the Dallas Museum of Art acquired in 2002, the selection highlights the achievements of key figures, including Erik Magnussen, Eliel Saarinen, Belle Kogan, John Prip and Robert Venturi, and the role that museums, department stores, hotels, and other institutions played in fostering demand and retail.

Always considered a luxury, silver used to be associated with life's key rituals, from birth, marriage, and awards to entertaining. With the passing of a formal to a casual way of life, precipitated by the Depression and World War II, silver has been replaced by other, less expensive materials and types of gifts. Even the phrase "born with a silver spoon" now holds little relevance for most people. So how did America's silverware industry, the largest in the world in the nineteenth century, become what it is today—the output of a few struggling companies in competition with one-of-a-kind studio work?

Silver usage was already waning in the 1920s, and faced with shrinking markets, manufacturers assumed a dual approach. They continued to produce conservative styles that recalled historic Continental patterns, and introduced innovative patterns with ties to fashion, art, architecture and new technologies. The ripple effect of the 1925 International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris was seminal to the latter trend.

Erik Magnussen's *Cubic Coffee Service*, from 1927, exploits the fractured interlocking planes and simultaneous perspectives of Cubist painting and sculpture. The inclusion of patinated and gilt panels heightens the eye-dazzling composition. In stark contrast, his swelling *Candy Jar*, from 1926, reflects the natural patterns of his native Scandinavia, as does Eliel Saarinen's graceful *Centerpiece*, circa 1929. A year earlier, the *Diament* dinette set, designed by pioneering product stylist Virginia Hamill, harnesses the angular protrusions of Magnussen's revolutionary Cubist line into a marvel of compact geometry with Bakelite color accents.

The skyscraper, a symbol of American industrial power, lends a nationalist touch to the Modernist style. Its setback profile influences the fashionable stepped motif seen in the fluted and staggered trunks of Alfred J. Flauder's 1929 salt and pepper shakers and the more minimalist *Candlesticks* designed by Merle Fenelon Faber, circa 1943–1950. The building's steel armature inspires the slender vertical blocks and slightly projecting horizontal slats in Reed & Barton's 1928 *Modernist* candlesticks and compote. Streamlining, a signature design element of the Machine Age, becomes an important influence in the 1930s, as the rounded corners and speed lines in Viktor Schreckengost's 1938 *K.K. Culver Trophy* boldly attest.

Some 20 years later, Marion Anderson Noyes's twisting *Candlesticks* with plastic black tips expresses the trend toward a free-flowing organic modernism. A lasting Danish influence informs John Prip's pod-shaped holloware with *Color-Glaze* interiors of the late 1950s and mid 1960s. Outer space inspires Robert J. King's 1964 *Celestial Centerpiece* with sparkling spinel sapphire "stars." The last quarter of the twentieth century suffers from under-representation, but the growing presence of architects and fashion designers is clear in the vine and grape leaf pattern of Stephen Dweck's *Serving Set* from 1986, and Robert Venturi's post-modern *Carving Set* from 1989, which cleverly riffs off the classical orders.

These and other standouts in the show reveal a complex web of art and life, while probing our very fantasies and aspirations. In the aggregate, "Modernism in American Silver" is a connoisseur's dream, allowing close examination of style and technique and crediting previously unrecognized designers, often crafts artists, and their impact on industrial design. Above all, as light dances off polished surfaces in the darkened galleries and the imagination whirls with visions of space travel, the natural world, fancy hotel dinners, and breakfast served in bed, we are reminded of the beauty and power of well-conceived and made objects: we take away the magic and vitality, not the decline of America's silver industry. For this, the exhibition delivers an experience pleasing to the eye *and* the mind.

Sarah Tanguy is an art historian living in Washington, D.C.

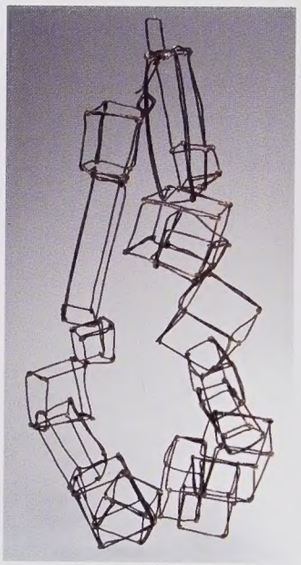
clockwise from top left
Marion Anderson Noyes
Towle Silversmiths
Candlesticks, ca. 1957
silver, plastic
Collection Dallas Museum of Art

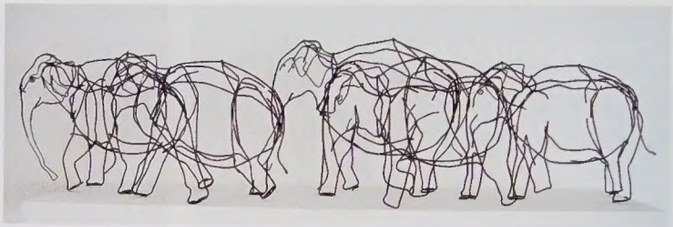
Jean G. Theobald
Wilcox Silver Plate Company, a division of International Silver Company
Diament Dinette Set, 1928
silverplate, bakelite
Collection Dallas Museum of Art

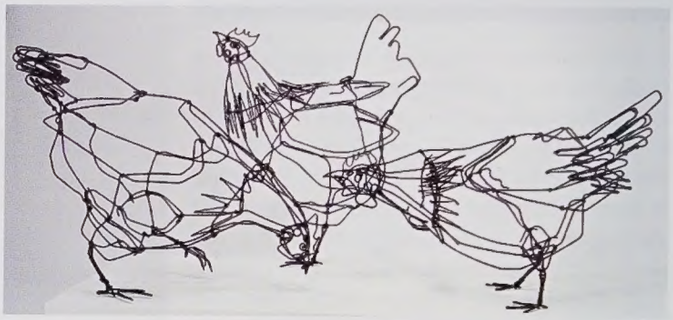
Robert J. King
International Silver Company
Celestial Centerpiece for the "Moon Room," 1964
silver, spinel sapphires
Collection Dallas Museum of Art

Erik Magnussen
Gorham Manufacturing Company
Cubic Coffee Service and Tray, 1927
silver, patina, gilt, ivory
Collection Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

REVIEWS







"NEW WORK BY THOMAS HILL"

VELVET DA VINCI, SAN FRANCISCO
MARCH 1 - 31, 2006

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

Successfully portraying animals isn't as easy as it looks. The artist has to dodge the pitfalls of photographic naturalism, sentimentality, cartooning or becoming so abstract that the animal's character has either been lost or changed beyond all recognition.

The bi-continental British sculptor Thomas Hill creates menageries of birds and animals that not only escape these dangers but are endowed with a particular charm and insight. They resonate with the nature-lover in all of us because in a thoughtful, loving and disciplined way, Hill has captured what we most value as the essence of the particular creature.

What, for example, is the special "chickenness" of a chicken that's so appealing? A food lover might say, the egg. However, Hill's pieces remind us that chickens are head-bobbing, beady-eyed, bustling, feathery-bottomed and enormously pattable birds. They also frequently turn their toes in when they walk.

His smaller birds are miracles of flight and agility, darting, swooping and fluttering. A flock of lightly sketched ostriches rush by in a blur of legs and feathers, while a life-size heron has been captured in a graceful moment of triumph with a fish in its beak. All are humming with vitality and barely arrested motion.

The majority of the 18 pieces in this show are constructed from half-hard steel wire with a high carbon content, plus occasional accents in copper, wood and enamel paint. Some are roughly soldered at the joints, others are simply interlocked and cold-connected. The results are masterful 3-D line drawings that ought to look skeletal but don't, particularly when small, eerie touches of surface wattle or painted eyes have been added.

Hill generally uses 18-gauge wire for the chickens and smaller birds. A herd of elephants and a turtle lurking under one of the display cases, are in 8 to12-gauge wire, suggesting the lumbering, though not ungraceful, heaviness of the live creatures. Wire not only shapes form, it creates texture, giving the heron a cascade of "feathers" and the turtle leathery-looking legs and a patterned shell. Even the elephants, sketched with fewer and often broken lines, manage to look slightly wrinkled. Not all the animals in the show are of open-wire construction. Hill has a handful of fanciful, roughly painted wood and bound-wire birds. They just stop short of being cartoon characters, but they are charming and funny, with a hint of playful malice—the sort of companion you'd like on your desk or bench when you're having a bad day.

Hill has been an animal lover from boyhood, when his parents kept a mini-menagerie of animals—chicken, ducks, geese, rabbits and guinea pigs. While studying domestic species and wildlife, he became interested in their group behavior. His show captures the cheek-by-jowl clustering of the elephants and the noisy mating dance of the cock and hen. The spaces in between are as important as the animals themselves.

His designs begin as sketches, carefully planned, then executed with the immediacy of an inspired scribble. He also acknowledges his ongoing debt to Edweard Muybridge, the first photographer to capture freeze-frame motion in birds, quadrupeds and man-made objects. Lately, Hill has been creating his own life studies, using digital video enlarged on the computer. He also regularly does life drawing at museums, zoos, aquariums, even the local fishmonger. A favorite place of study is the Walter Rothchild Zoological Museum in England, with its formidable collection of 40,000 taxidermied animals.

Originally trained as a jeweler, Hill makes little wearable art—unfortunately—because when he does it is distinctive: This show included several abstract pins sculpted from steel wire. The showstopper was a massive, but wearable, necklace of three-dimensional wire boxes, seemingly suspended by a nimble juggler.

My main regret about the show was that it failed to include Hill's newest ventures—line carvings on bone. Unlike classic scrimshaw, which uses ivory and is typically static in its representations, Hill does quick, lively sketches of birds and animals on bone. One example in the gallery (but not included in the show) was a small runic bone sculpture incised with browsing and bleating sheep. After this, traditional scrimshaw looks like dullsville.

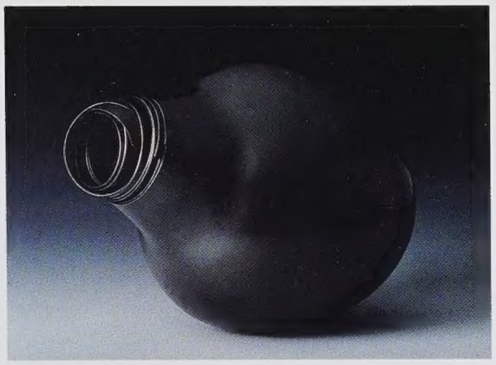
Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left
Necklace, 2005
steel wire
18 x 2"

Elephants, 2006
steel wire
48 x 18 x 20"

Chickens, 2006
steel wire
36 x 6 x 12 x 18"

Heron, 2005 (detail)
steel wire, paint
34 x 31 x 12"



"MATERIAL AND SPACE: AN EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY METAL WORK"

MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
ART AND DESIGN GALLERY
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI
APRIL 7 - APRIL 28, 2006

by GLEN R. BROWN

Based solely on the criterion that the works submitted be metal objects other than jewelry, "Material and Space" makes a strong case for the relatively themeless invitational exhibition. Resisting the authorial will that has long dominated curatorial practice (the tendency on the part of curators to seek creative control on a par with artists) organizer Sarah Perkins solicited pieces by 16 master metalsmiths whose varied work reflects the breadth of the field. The result could have been a chaotic rivalry for the viewer's attention, but—despite the range in metals from gold to steel; in surface treatment from patination to enameling; and in medium from holloware to sculpture—the exhibition is remarkably harmonious. The natural inference is that quality alone can be a unifying factor equal to any other, more deliberate, curatorial theme.

With respect to color, the works range in intensity from Helen Shirk's distinctively lush colored-pencil-on-copper forms (which achieve as convincing a visual metamorphosis from inorganic to organic as anything else to be found in contemporary metals) to the somber gray luster of Susan Ewing's *Laughable Loves: Black Heart Vessel*, an enigmatic poppy-bud form inspired by the dark wit of Czech writer Milan Kundera). Somewhere in between on the color scale are Elliott Pujol's crimp-raised *Seagreen and Gold Bowl*—which, through its contrast of aureate interior and cool exterior, suggests an illuminated amphitheatre in the twilight—and June Schwarcz's subtle enamel on electroformed copper cylinders, of which *#2917 Adam's Pants* (a reflection on her high-school-aged grandson's fashionable attire) is a baggy masterpiece of acquiescence to gravity.

The exhibition included several superb examples of non-objective holloware, among them Gary Noffke's *Forged Flat Bottom Vase*, a spontaneous upward spiral of texture that combines with a flaring rim to convey the impression of vigorous centrifugal force. Fred Fenster's pewter trio of *Covered Vessel, Vase* and *Pair Salt and Pepper* seems to seize the energy of waves by undulating the planes of a simple rectangular box form. Douglas Harling's fine silver *Beggar's Bowl* is a quieter piece whose scale, lyrical lip and granular exterior are evocative of Raku tea bowls. Like languid rivers concealing the force of their currents or boulders softened by mantles of lichens and mosses, Rick Smith's steel boxes give the impression of both serenity and great underlying strength.

Many pieces in the exhibition retain the qualities of the vessel, in some cases secretively, yet serve simultaneously as representational sculpture. Richard Mawdsley's fabricated and raised sterling silver *Gamma: Water Tower #3*, a long-stemmed chalice intricately fitted with the details of a fanciful reservoir or cooling tower, is a paragon of imitation in precious metal and on minute scale, of the everyday, blue-collar contexts of metal. Andrew Macdonald's industrial-looking works, such as *Calorific* and *Pumping Unit*, forged from steel and joined with rivets that imitate nuts and bolts, are superb variations of the same genre. Like Macdonald's works, Suzanne Pugh's are among the few to utilize wall space. Her simultaneously sinister and compelling rendition of a suspended ball turret complete with twin machine guns manifests the ironic sense of preciousness that miniaturization can lend, even to instruments of death. A similar effect occurs with Catherine Grisez's eerie music box *Five Year Cure*, where a sterling silver scorpion tail invades a cavity of copper veins and red plastic tubing like a persistent cancer.

Not surprisingly, a number of works inhabit conceptual territory, referencing the vessel as part of a metals tradition but negating key aspects of its utility. Kee-Ho Yuen's whimsical brass and acrylic-painted *Paperbag*, for example, cleverly conjures the teapot concept: his pastel-colored boutique "bag" provides the volume, while "paper" teapot silhouettes furnish the contours. Dennis Nahabetian's copper mesh, patina and polychrome *Vessel #68 (Homage to Hans Coper)* seems almost the apparition of a vessel with its sievelike surface rendering it physically insubstantial. Billie Jean Theide's bronze mesh, electroformed copper, enamel and patina *Butte #EF-11 (Victory)* combines her distinctive boat-shaped teapot form with a checkered-flag motif reminiscent of the geometric "dazzle" camouflage once painted on battleships and evokes multiple meanings of the word vessel. The most material dissolution of the vessel, however, is Myra Mimlitsch-Gray's *Melting Teapot*, which overspills its pedestal with the molten biomorphism of a Jean Arp "concretion." This work embodies and affirms—like a synopsis of the exhibition as a whole—the fluidity that traditional forms and concepts have acquired in the field of contemporary metal work.

Glen R. Brown is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

clockwise from top left
Susan Ewing
Laughable Loves: Black Heart Vessels, 1999
sterling silver
6 x 8 x 5"

Helen Shirk
Lavender Pod (commemorative cup XVI), 2004
copper, patina, colored pencils
8 x 21 x 8"

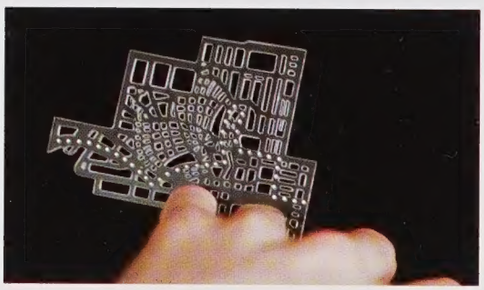
June Schwarcz
Adam's Pants #3, 2002
enamel, copper
12 1/2 x 13 x 8"

REVIEWS

"ANNA LINDSAY MACDONALD: PATH"

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE, TORONTO
MARCH 25 - MAY 7, 2006

by BARBARA ISHERWOOD



Illuminating beauty obscured by familiarity is the purview of Anna Lindsay MacDonald. For the past year the artist has used her own fascination with urban navigation as a point of departure to create jewelry that highlights an aspect of city experience that we tend to overlook; the paths we follow in our daily routines. Using city maps as the basis of her explorations, the artist translates segments employing materials associated with civic building, industry and labor—stainless steel, aluminum, rubber, acetate, acrylic, plastic laminate and paper. Potentially cold and hard in appearance, these surfaces are rendered delicate when pierced to reveal the patterns and meanderings of city streets.

In the works on view in "Path," MacDonald enlists an additional source of antique lace patterns, which, like maps, are also made of intersecting lines. *Fragment (brooch)*, made of pierced stainless steel, is held in place on the shoulder by two map pins fabricated from steel and red rubber. The spaces that are sawn away represent the sites where we live, work and play; the metal that remains marks the routes we use to navigate from one place to the next. The map's bird's-eye view reveals the contrasts of chaos and order that make a city such an exciting place. The brooch's outline, derived from a Gothic-style lace pattern, balances the rigor of the steel with a graceful silhouette. In the installation, red enamel powder sprinkled over the brooch onto the surface of the case echoed the patterns of symmetry, interrupted by natural features, that is the city. The artist also sees the powder as evoking the earth that bears our footsteps.

In *Fragment (bracelet)*, aluminum is pierced with a lace motif on one half, and a map motif on the other. The controlled design of the lace, an artifact constructed by a single person at one point in time, morphs into a tangle of lines and curves that represents the map of an old neighborhood that has evolved over decades through the labor of many hands. This piece was also rolled in red enamel powder, providing a full-length perspective of the bracelet that revealed that the lace and map segments are each outlined by the same lace motif used in the piercing

A fleur-de-lis lace pattern appears in the *North (ring/bracelet)* set, in the silhouette of four rings hung on a stainless steel bangle that is tipped with red enamel. One section of map is executed in pierced steel, while another three are actual paper map segments that have been pierced then laminated. The artist notes that the fleur-de-lis is used in maps and compasses to signify the direction north, and the maps she has worked with are all oriented that way. Red enamel dust, sprinkled through the pieces to form a cross, adds yet another layer of pattern and repetition to the presentation. MacDonald takes advantage of the exhibition context to extend the ideas in her works beyond their own physical borders, or the way they would be experienced if worn.

Other pieces in "Path" carry on the lace/map theme using different materials. *Path: Leaside to Lakeshore* are two ring/handpieces of translucent acrylic, each pierced with a fused pattern of these motifs. Sterling silver and 18k gold rivets form gleaming paths along this miniaturized route from northeast Toronto to Lake Ontario in the city's south end. In *Lace Cuffs*, lace has been scanned onto sections of red and black acetate, which have been painstakingly cut in the shape of maps, then folded to make bracelets, with little steel and 18k fleur-de-lis' cufflinks holding the ends together. The feeling here is delicate and airy, while the *Leaside to Lakeshore* rings have a more architectonic quality.

Anna Lindsay MacDonald is just at the start of her professional career, yet as the works in this exhibition demonstrate, she already possesses a strong vision that unites rich concept with a high standard of execution.

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer on visual arts and culture.

clockwise from top
Fragment (brooch), 2006
pierced stainless steel, steel and rubber coating (pins)
9 1/8 x 3/50 x 3 1/8"
Photo: Adam Krawesky

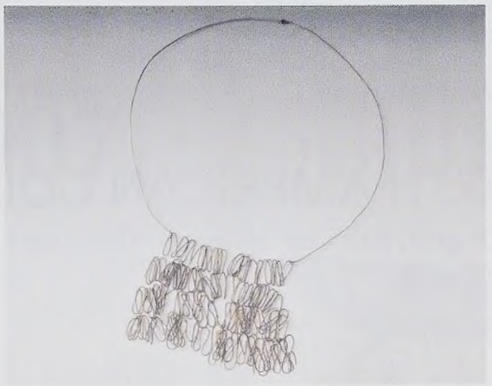
Path Lakeshore (Two Finger Ring), 2006
pierced acrylic, sterling silver
3 x 1/4 x 2 5/8"
Photo: Adam Krawesky

Lace Cuffs, 2006
cut acetate, stainless steel, 18k gold
4 1/4 x 2 5/8 x 2 3/4"
Photo: Adam Krawesky

"IL MODO ITALIANO"

THE MONTRÉAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, MONTRÉAL
MAY 4 - AUGUST 27, 2006

by SHELLEY POMERANCE



To examine an entire century of Italian design is a daunting undertaking. To examine those one hundred years of Italian design in conjunction with the same period in Italian avant-garde art, to focus on both simultaneously, and to make the appropriate connections between the two, is formidable. The Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, in collaboration with the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and the Mart (Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy) has undertaken just such a task in presenting "il Modo Italiano: Italian design and Avant-garde in the 20th Century." Three hundred and eighty works—a century of tables, chairs, lamps, typewriters, televisions, telephones, radios, scooters, posters, clocks, coffeepots and more, juxtaposed with painting, prints, sculpture, photography and film. At first, one has the impression of entering a very cluttered home, the artworks wedged in between too many chairs and tables. One wants to simplify and synthesize, to tell the story of twentieth-century Italian design by focusing on lamps, tables or typewriters. Let's choose the coffeepot. What could be more quintessentially Italian than coffee? And fortunately, to help us synthesize, the curators have neatly divided this long century into four sections: Boundless Optimism, Monumentality and Rationalism, Reconstruction and the Economic Miracle and the Postmodern Testing Ground.

Boundless Optimism covers the first two decades of the century, the flowering of the decorative arts with art nouveau—known in Italy as Stile floreale or il Liberty (a reference to the fashionable floral print fabrics from Liberty's of London)—and Symbolism. Chairs and tables echo the sensuous, fluid lines and plant forms found in paintings of peasants at work in fertile fields and naked youth cavorting in swirling emerald waters. The artisanal crafts flourished; principles of design applied to fine furniture and porcelain vases, though not to the purely utilitarian. The common coffeepot is nowhere to be seen, still hidden away in its kitchen cupboard.

It is not until the onset of industrialization that the utilitarian becomes an object of beauty. The period between the two world wars, concurrent with Mussolini's fascist regime, falls here under the heading Monumentality and Rationalism, referring to the omnipresent struggle between classicism and modernism. The tone is set by Renato Bertelli's *Testa di Mussolini*, which creates the impression of a double profile spinning in perpetual motion: an eternal, all-seeing Duce. Somehow, in spite of the dictatorship, a surprising amount of experimentation and freedom existed in Italian art and design. Futurism's colorful, jagged geometry and repetitive rhythms jostle with massive monochromatic structures, surrealism edging mischievously in between the two. This is a period of contradictions, evidenced in art by de Chirico's eerie universe contrasting nature and architecture, and in design, stolid wooden furniture versus minimalist lamps and appliances. (Imagine the shockwave produced in 1932 by Olivetti's lipstick-red portable typewriter!) Making its appearance then, not the coffee pot but its more genteel cousin: Guglielmo Ulrich's squat *Tea Service* of 1935, teapot, creamer and sugar, silver with ebony handles, simple, round and earthbound.

Next, a period devoted to "redesigning everything, from the spoon to the city" to quote Ernesto Rogers. Reconstruction and the Economic Miracle covers post-war rebuilding of cities and industry, the growth of the furniture industry, the emergence of design in mass production and the decline of artisanal practice. We pass Fiats, Vespas, Olivetti typewriters and Pucci playsuits to arrive at two contrasting tea and coffee services. The year is 1957. Olga Finzi's *Manhattan*, a subtle study in minimalism and verticality, is a stacking tea and coffee service, a cylindrical tower of sugar bowl, coffee pot, teapot and creamer. Next to it, Lino Sabattini's *Como* is all jutting angles and diagonals, self-reflecting on its silver tray. The teapot stretches forward, reaching for the future, for expansion. These designers were making a concerted effort to create a look and style that was distinctly Italian, as opposed to Scandinavian. Also during this period *Arte programmata*—conceptual art's Italian counterpart—comes to the fore: Lucio Fontana produces his slashed monochromatic canvas *Concetta spaziale* and Piero Manzoni his multiples: Kaolin-covered bread rolls, calendars, alphabets and an edition of 90 small cans of *Merda d'artista*, guaranteed to be "freshly preserved, produced and tinned in 1961."

There is a regrettably small amount of jewelry in the show, but what there is dates mostly from this period—including two necklaces, one by Fausto Melotti, circa 1966, in brass, resembles a jumble of paper clips dangling from a wire circle. The other is Olga Finzi Baldi's necklace/waistcoat *Continuità di Pensiero (Continuity of Thought)*; a strand of gold loops around the neck, turns into an accordion hinge studded with tourmaline cabochons and circles the waist.

During the century's final decades, the 70s, 80s and 90s, art and design merge, become virtually indistinguishable. Tabletops double as expressionist paintings, apparently purely sculptural forms turn out to be chairs, fruit bowls and vases. After much inspection, a large pop-art cactus is revealed to be a well-disguised coat stand. The curators of "il Modo Italiano" call this era the Postmodern Testing Ground—a deconstruction and reinterpretation of the household object. The coffee maker seems to reach its design peak during the 80s, when Alessi invites eleven international architects to recreate the tea and coffee service. In this exhibition we see their experiments; Alessandro Mendini's *Tea and Coffee Piazza* composed of sleek orbs and ovals, Riccardo Dalisi's comical *Toto, The King* and *Waving Coffee Maker*, Aldo Rossi's coronation of the form, his *Tea and Coffee Piazza* "under glass." We find the results now in stores and on stovetops everywhere: imitations of Dalisi's *Neapolitan Coffee Maker* and Rossi's *La Cupola*. These coffeepots are an intrinsic part of our daily routines and rituals, an incarnation of the sensual pleasures involved in preparing, serving and sipping, form and function flawlessly combined to give us something so very simple—a good cup of coffee.

Shelley Pomerance is an arts writer living in Montréal.

clockwise from left
Alessandro Mendini
Tea and Coffee Service ("Tea and Coffee Piazza" Collection), 1983
silver
teapot: 9 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 4 3/4"
coffee pot: 9 1/2 x 7 3/4 x 5 1/2"

Fausto Melotti
Necklace, 1966
brass
3 1/2 x 5 1/2"
Galleria Christian Stein, Milan; Archivio Melotti, Milan

Olga Finzi Baldi
Continuità di Pensiero (Continuity of Thought, Necklace), 1972
gold, tourmalin
19 x 9 x7 1/4"
Olga Finzi Baldi Collection

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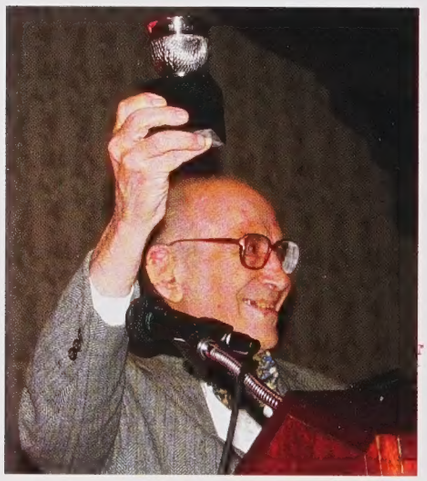
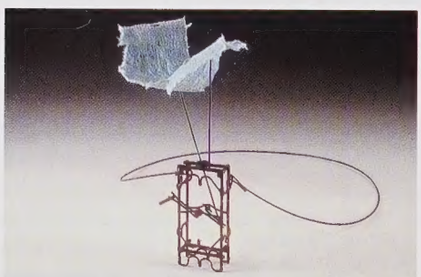
by Dana Singer





SNAG 2006 Conference Largest Ever

A record 900 people gathered in Chicago for the conference "Mind & Matter: From Thought to Object," hosted by the Chicago Metal Arts Guild and chaired by Alix Mikesell and Pam Robinson. The conference enjoyed significant support from Rio Grande, 3M, Inc. and a private foundation. We also want to thank Bill Gangi/Multisensory Arts, Myron Toback and Otto Frei Co. for their sponsorships. Conference attendees enjoyed 16 concurrent exhibitions including a special reception at the Chicago Cultural Center of Kiff Slemmons' "Re: Pair and Imperfection" which was underwritten in large part by Cork Catering and Special Events and Art Clay World USA.

Kurt Matzdorf Named SNAG's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

Kurt Matzdorf received SNAG's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award during the conference in Chicago, and was joined onstage by dozens of his students. One of SNAG's founding members, Matzdorf is Professor Emeritus of Gold- and Silversmithing at the State University of New York, New Paltz. His record of accomplishments as a teacher, artist and mentor is virtually unparalleled and his students have gone on to become leaders in the field. Professor Matzdorf's ceremonial work is known throughout the world. He is exhibited in major public museums on both sides of the Atlantic, including London's Victoria & Albert Museum and the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In a moving ceremony featuring a slide presentation of his life and work, Professor Matzdorf received the award, an elegant sterling silver vessel created by SNAG member Cynthia Eid.

SNAG Adopts Responsible Mining Resolution

SNAG joined the ever-growing list of individuals, companies and organizations, adopting a "Responsible Mining Resolution," co-authored by members Susan Kingsley and Christina Miller. The resolution calls on the mining industry to produce gold in ways that respect "environmental, social and human rights standards," and to work within an "authenticated framework of responsible mining practices."

SNAG 2006 Educational Endowment Scholarships

The Educational Endowment Scholarships are SNAG's highest awards offered to students, both graduate and undergraduate. This year scholarships were awarded to graduate students Gary Schott and Masako Onodera, both studying at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and to undergraduate student Kristi Rae Rader, Stephen S. Austin State University. Honorable Mention awards went to Sungyeoul Lee, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Corey Ackelmire, Kent State University.

SNAG Welcomes Three New Members to Board of Directors

Kris Patzlaff (jeweler and educator, Humboldt State University) was elected SNAG's next President, and Kristin Lora (studio jeweler, metalsmith) and James Thurman (metalsmith and educator, Pennsylvania State University) were elected to two other open seats on SNAG's board of directors. SNAG heartily thanks outgoing president Ken Bova and board members James Cohen, Barbara Heinrich and Barbara Minor for their years of dedicated service.

Dana Singer is executive director of SNAG.

top to bottom
Kurt Matzdorf receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award at SNAG's Chicago Conference.

Works by SNAG's 2006 Educational Endowment Scholarship recipients:

Masako Onodera
Drops of Life #2, 2004
nu-gold, copper, sterling silver, glass
3 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 14"

Kristi Rae Rader
Mom and Pops Waltzes, 2006
8-track tape, rubber, copper, brass
4 x 11 3/8 x 9 3/8"

Gary Schott
Caress (neckpiece), 2006
steel wire, cloth, plastic-coated steel cable
6 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 4 1/4"

SNAG's president elect Kris Patzlaff, New SNAG board members Kristin Lora and James Thurman

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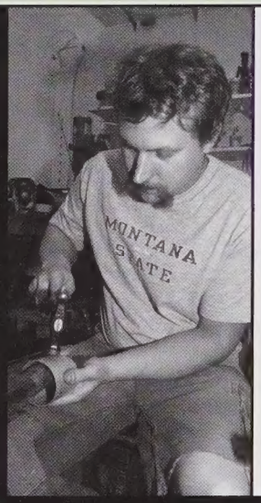

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Vessel by Kim Cridler

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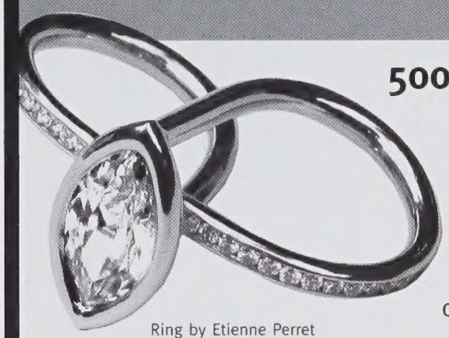
Wedding Rings



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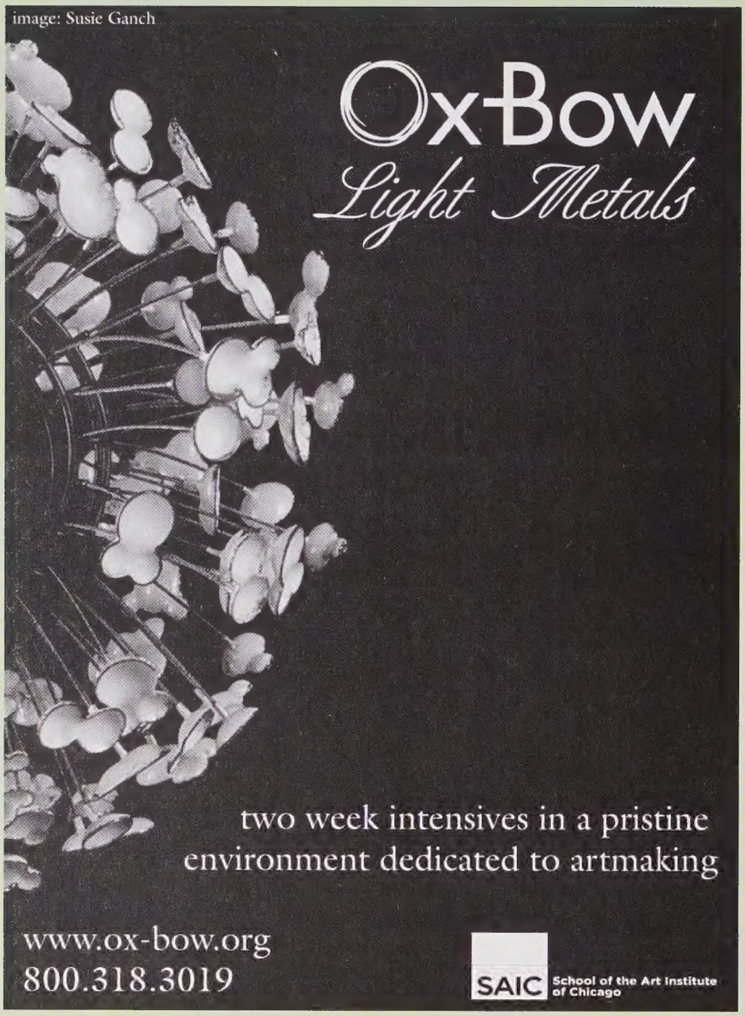

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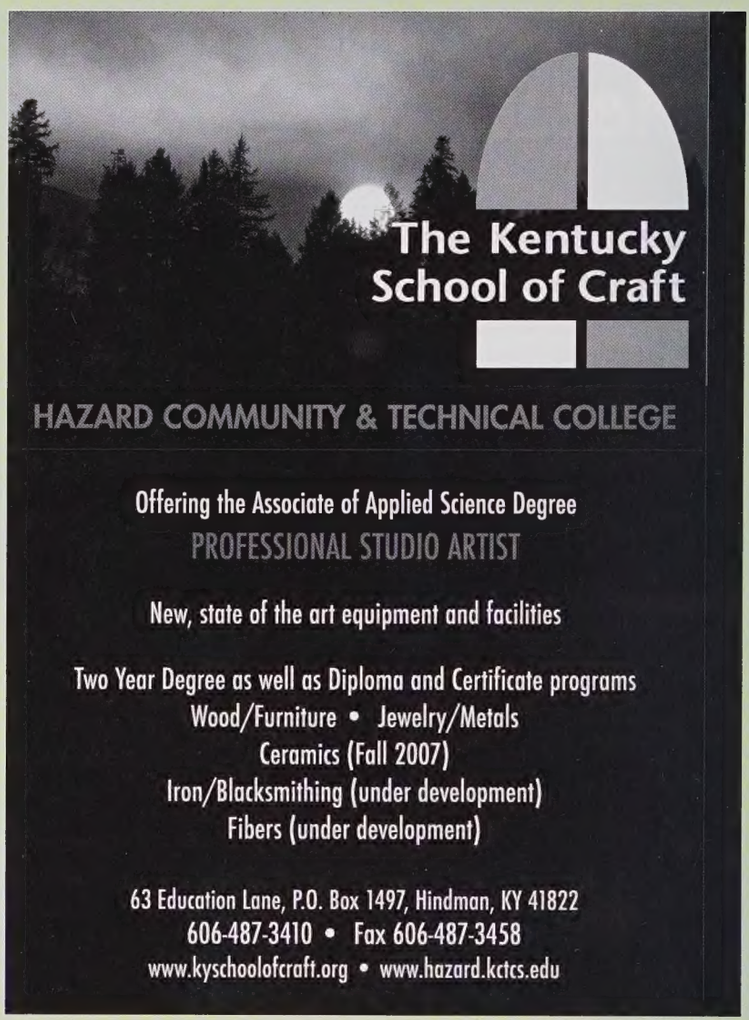

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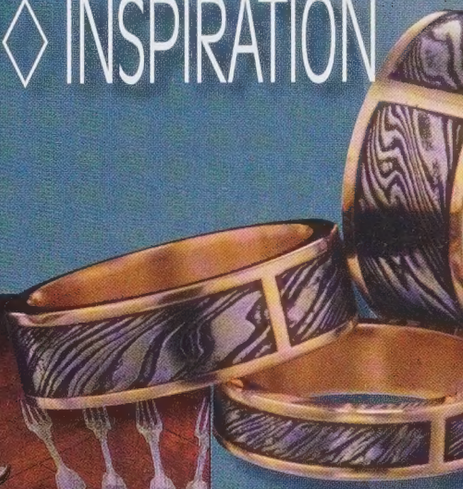

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Douglas Harling
Title: Sea Saw
Description: 1-3/8"x2-1/4"x1/2", 22k gold, 14k gold pin mechanism, and freshwater pearls
Photo: Douglas Harling

Namu Cho
Title: Rings
Description: Damascus steel with 22k gold, 18k gold
Photo: Hap Sakwa Photography

(Winter 2005 Metalsmith)
cover: Cornelia Parker
Title: Thirty Pieces of Silver (exhaled)-Cake Stand
Description: Dimensions variable (43" diameter), 30 silver plated items crushed by 250-ton industrial press, metal wire
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

Sarah Perkins
Title: Stubble Beggar's Bowl
Description: 3"x4"x4", copper, enamel
Photo: Sarah Perkins

Kiwon Wang
Title: Water Drop Series
Description: 2-1/2"x2-1/2"x3/8, 14k gold, pearl, sterling silver
Photo: Kiwon Wang

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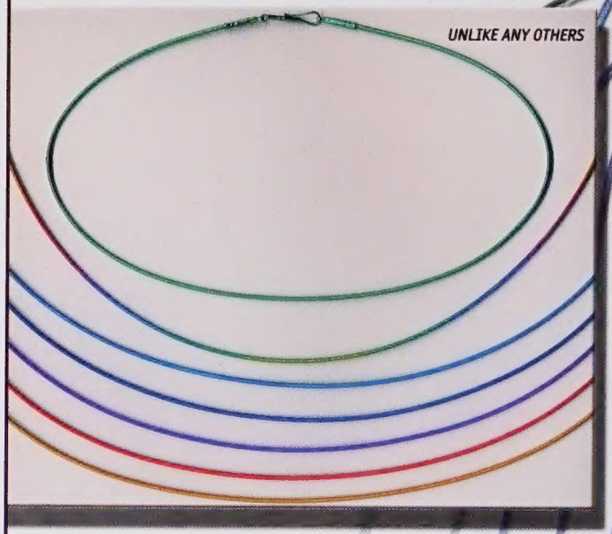

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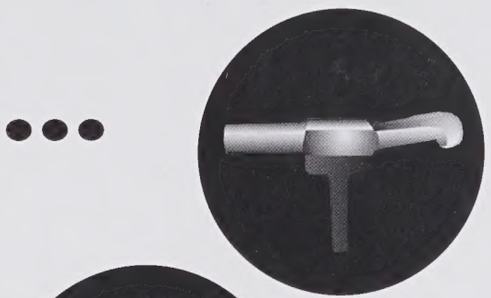

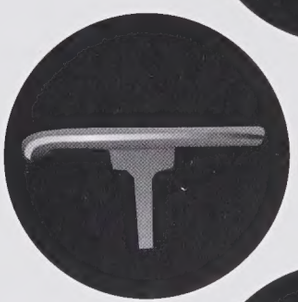

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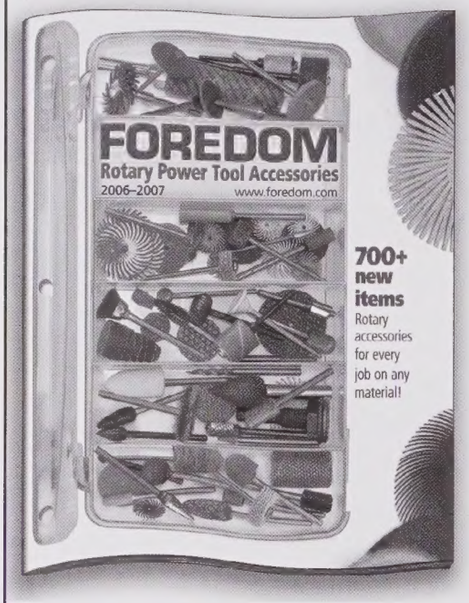

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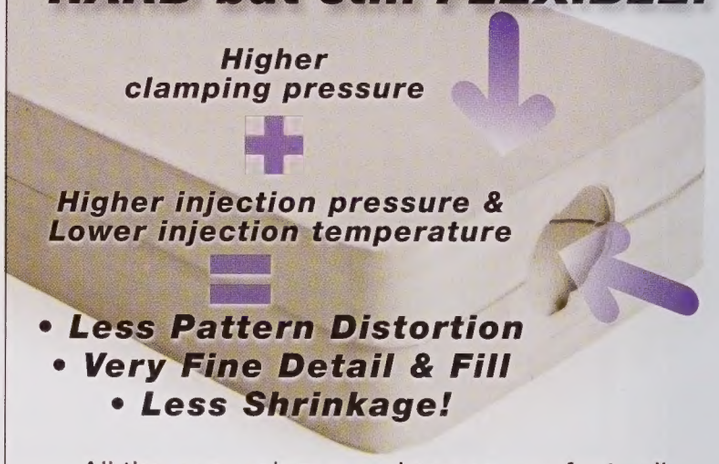

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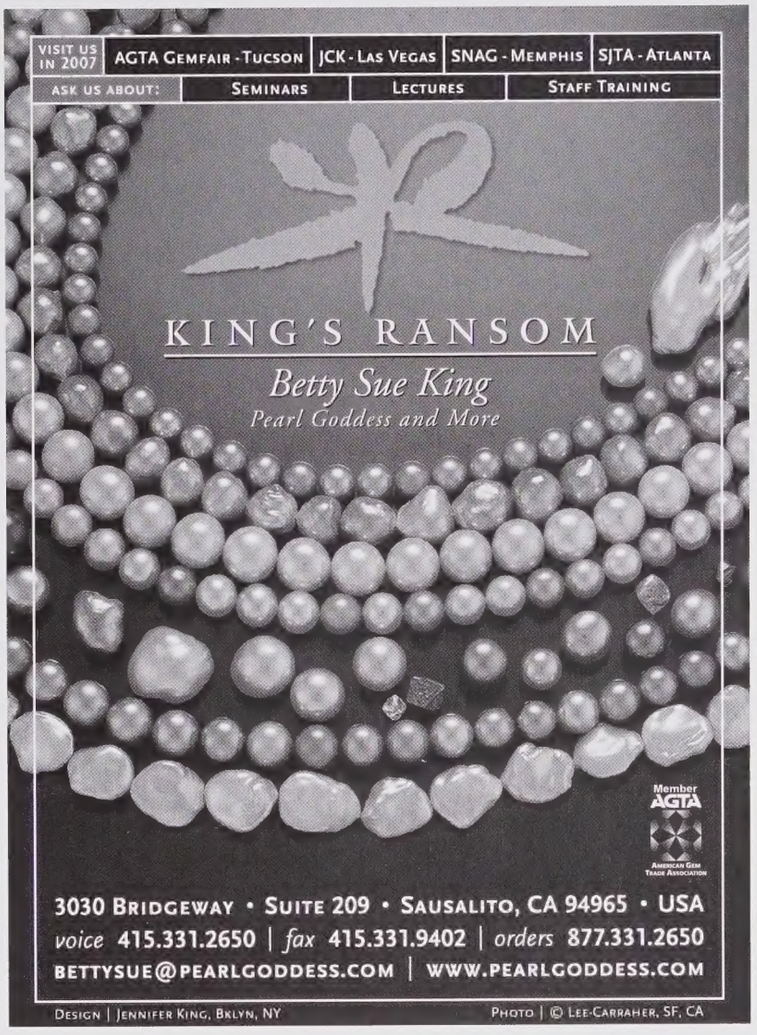

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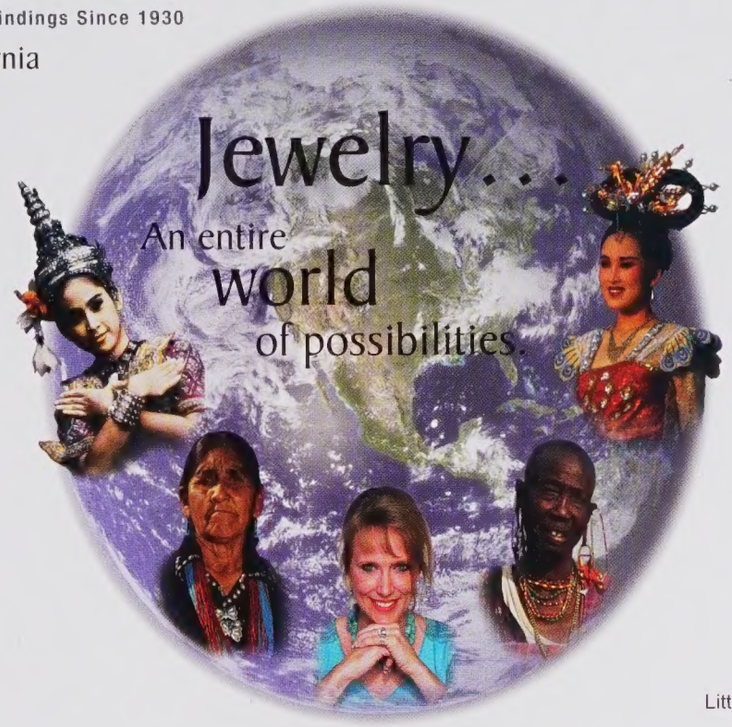

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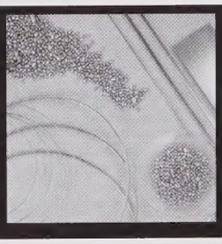

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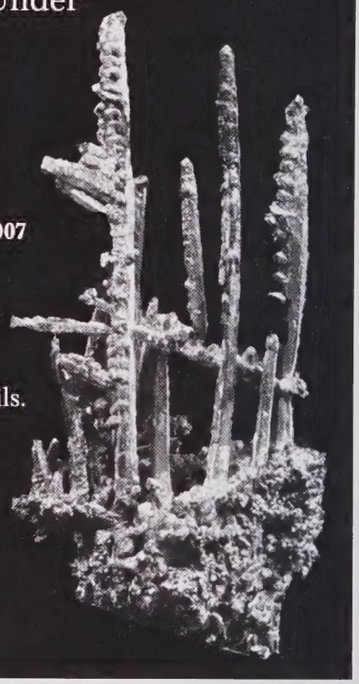

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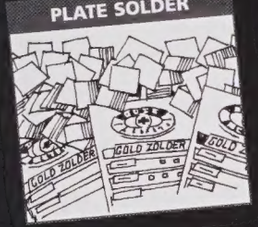

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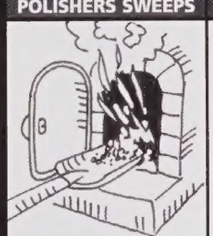

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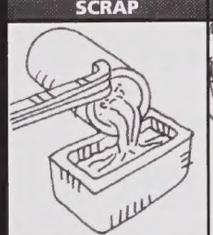
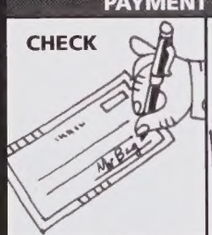


BENCH SWEEPS

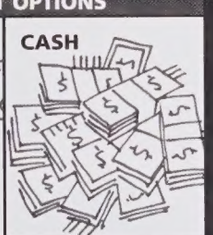
FREE PICK-UP SERVICE

PAYMENT OPTIONS

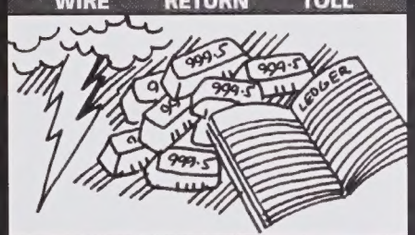
CHECK



CASH



WIRE RETURN TOLL



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I always wanted a doll house. Staring up at the shelves at the craft store, I fell in love with all those miniature copper utensils, cartons of eggs, antique lamps and Victorian rugs. I pictured myself in those little rooms, sitting on that comfy chair, owning all those bright utensils. I could stand there for hours until the store clerk would ask what I was looking for and scare me away.

"Tea For Two"
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I cherish details that don't reveal themselves right away—the surprises. The lid comes off. Good. But something more. A miniature tea party inside, with two chairs, two tea cups and tiny things on the table (I like my tea with a bit of cream & sugar). And a hinged door to look inside. As I worked, I played. I soldered and it made me happy. This was a dreamland, one that I wanted to be in.

Now, all grown up and independent, I have my own place to call home. But this space that I create—a place safe for the over-grown child—is something more special. It's there when I want it, not too much, not too little. I don't need to worry about electricity bills or neighbors or eating leftovers for dinner.

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